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COMIC BOOK MARKETPLACE

No. 66
January 1999

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CONTENTS

NUMBER 66 Jan. 1999

FEATURES

The Riddle of Batman & Raven!
This new wrinkle in comic book history will blow your mind! by Will Murray **17**

The Women of the Spirit!
Eisner's femme fatales are beautiful, sexy, and dangerous! by Catherine Garnier **20**

MAD-Man Kelly Freas!
Candid conversations with Alfred E.'s favorite cover artist! by Stephen Barrington **26**

Mad About MAD!
HOO HAA! The cover art genius of Kelly Freas! by Mark Magarity **29**

Marvel Price Variants... & Beyond!
Variant multiples, price-less covers, and a new discovery! by Jon McClure **34**

10 Terrific Superman Collectibles!
Marvelous Man Of Steel memorabilia! by Jim Hambrick **44**

A Tribute to Andre LeBlanc!
From Intellectual Amos to Boris Karloff, his work lives on! by Edward Rhoades **47**

COLUMNS

Adventures Into Weird Words
Independents' Days! by Pat S. Calhoun **11**

Nolan's Notebook
Sports success and film failure! by Michelle Nolan **13**

CBM Forum
Overpriced... or overgraded? Marketplace opinion by Craig Rader **46**

The Naiman Market Report
Gotta get it before the price goes up! by Michael Naiman **64**

Gentner's Greats
Fox books are lewd and crude, hence their great charms! by Stephen H. Gentner **80**

Volume 2 • Number 66
January 1999
A Gemstone Publication

DEPARTMENTS

Letter from the Editor 4
Marketplace Mail 6
Back Issues 7
Subscriptions 8
CBM Advertising 9
In Memoriam 59

ON THE COVER "Be good... or Spirit spank" by Golden Age legend, Lou Fine.

Graphics courtesy Denis Kitchen & Kitchen Sink Press; Spirit © Will Eisner

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Dents and all...

Except for the $5 I received from my grandparents (which made me wealthy beyond my 8-year-old dreams), the Christmas of 1957 was uneventful. When I returned to school after winter break, the year had turned to 1958. January became February, and I found myself in the well-trodden newsstand aisle of Corrin Drugs, by now the unspent $5 literally burning a hole in my pocket. I picked out my usual cadre of DC, ACG, and pre-hero Marvel titles, but the pile didn't even break the dollar mark. Determined to spend just a little more, my eyes searched the rows of *Colliers, Life, Redbook,* and the most forbidden periodical of all... *Playboy*! Quickly averting my curious eyes, I was assaulted by two copies of *MAD* #38, the closest (and the one I rejected) still bearing the four familiar dents of the distributor's bundling wire. Comics were a dime... but *MAD* was a quarter and a major investment for me... that's why I'd never bought one before. But the chimpanzee-painted cover looked fun so I added my first *MAD* to the pile, paid Mr. Corrin, and left with my paper treasures.

When Monday morning rolled around, I'd already read and reread Bill Gaines' wonderful mag a dozen times. Then I got a brainstorm! I folded the issue in half, tucked it securely under my shirt and into the top of my pants, and proceeded to sneak the paragon of kid-literature into Mrs. Leudke's third grade class. At the first recess, out came the secreted contraband, much to the delight of my male classmates. (See the letter from the editor in *CBM* #16.)

Then disaster struck! Mrs. Leudke noticed the magazine from the corner of her sharp eyes and "confiscated" it. But I was undaunted. Immediately after school I marched back to Corrin's, determined to buy the other copy, dents and all. But I was greeted with more disappointment... it was already sold.

While still suffering the slings and arrows of disappointment, I happened to notice another comic-like magazine. Maybe all was not lost... maybe this funny looking periodical was like *MAD*... maybe I could still be the hit of the elementary school playground.

The weird *MAD* look-alike turned out to be *Cracked* #1. In hind sight it was less funny and a bit lamer than *MAD*... but to my 8-year-old brain it seemed a fitting substitute. Out came my quarter (plus a penny tax) and into my life came *Cracked Magazine* for the first time.

I didn't realize it at the time, but *Cracked* was a home for refugees from the Atlas "implosion" of mid 1957 as well as former employees of EC, Fawcett, DC, and others. In the first dozen issues or so, its masthead of contributing artists and writers was truly remarkable and historic. The editor was Sol Brodsky and the writers included the legendary Bill Ward and Jerry Siegel (misspelled "Siegal" in the credits).

And the list of artists read like a "who's who" of comic industry greats. The amazing credits included John Severin, Paul Reinman, Russ Heath, Bill Ward, Joe Maneely, Bill Everett, Pete Costanza, Carl Burgos, Al Williamson, Angelo Torres, Gray Morrow, Syd Shores, Bernard Bailey, Bill Elder, and Al Jaffee!

Yet even with this incredible bonanza of writing and art, *Cracked Magazine* is still generally ignored by collectors today. If you're a fan and/or collector of the 1950's *MAD* or the many interesting *MAD* look-alikes, maybe it's time to give the undervalued early issues of *Cracked* another look. And when you do you'll find that FN copies of most of the first dozen issues of these 1950's satirical gems still list for less than $10 each! Remember... you read it here first!

May you fill the holes on your want list...

Gary

Gary M. Carter

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Grading system problems?

Much has been written recently in CBM and elsewhere concerning supposed difficulties and controversy in the application of existing grading standards. But does a problem with the system really exist?

If "mint" is disregarded, there are 7 basic grades. Including the 14 "+" and "-" grades and the 6 combination ("/") grades there are theoretically 27 different grades. If "fair" and "poor" are also disregarded, there are 5 basic grades, and 19 different if the +, - and / grades are included. With a thorough understanding of only the 5 basic grades, it should be possible to work skillfully with all 19, without attempting to memorize anything elaborate. The Overstreet Price Guide and Overstreet Grading Guide both explain the basic grades quite clearly.

It is in the best interest of the hobby for dealers to use +, - and / grades when selling their books. It has been my experience that books which fall squarely into one of the 5 basic grades are in the minority. This is logical, because grading comics is largely a measurement process, where the extent and impact of a defect, or numerous different defects, have to be taken into account. It is not reasonable to expect that each book will exactly line up with one of the basic grades described in the Guides. This is comparable to any other process involving measurement. For example, almost no one is exactly 5' 10" tall; in almost all cases the subject will be a fraction of an inch above or below this height, if the measurement is done accurately.

Rounding or truncating the condition of each comic to one of the 5 basic grades is an efficient way for recording a personal collection. The books in my own collection are all rounded to the closest basic grade, largely because I track most of my information on graph sheets where it is much easier to enter "F" into a very small square rather than "F+" or "F/VF." The rounding creates little or no problem, since the recorded conditions are primarily to assist in decisions to purchase upgrade comics. Like most collectors, I generally buy an upgrade book only if I think it is significantly better than what I already have. I use 2 full basic grades (e.g. VF vs. VG) difference as a guideline, which means the purchased book will be an improvement even if my list is out by a rounding-caused fraction of a full grade.

Although it is practical to make decisions when all books are either FN or VF in personal checklists, this approach has drawbacks if used when selling comics, since so many comics will be almost a toss-up between 2 basic grades. In the current Overstreet Comic Book Price Guide, the most common GD: FN: NM ratio seems to be 1:3:11, reflecting a generally accepted viewpoint among collectors that high grade comics are worth much more than lower grade books. An issue which Guides $30 in FN would be worth $70 in VF, assuming of course that there are no reasons why the Guide should be considered obsolete or inappropriate for that issue or title. If a particular copy accurately grades FN/VF, it would be worth $50. Should it be priced at $50 or should it be rounded to FN and priced at $30, as some writers in CBM have suggested? Since FN and VF are both above-average conditions considered desirable by a majority of collectors, and VF copies list at 133% higher than FN copies, it would seem to make a great deal of sense that a book which bridges some of the gap between the two conditions should be worth more than a book which falls squarely into the FN grade. A $50 price for a FN/VF book would seem to be far more appropriate than a $30 price. If the comic is a popular and readily-salable item it would not be feasible for a dealer to sell it for $30, which he could easily approximate the dealer's cost if he had to pay his supplier a percentage based on $50.

I agree with Eric Martin's comments in CBM #63 that dealers who use a lot of +, - and / in their grading are often trying to suggest their books are better than they really are. I have found this to be especially true when a dealer's stock is primarily books in lower grades.

This is less applicable to a dealer who has truly higher-grade material since attractive books can stand on their own and sell themselves, without any attempt to stretch or prop up the grade. If an inventory has been skillfully graded the FN+ books will generally be a bit

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nicer than the FN books. The biggest problem is not really caused by the grading system itself. Rather, it is often the failure on the part of dealers to perform any kind of reality check on a book they think they have finished grading. For example, FN is not supposed to be a shabby book, even though a reading of the grade description in either Guide sometimes might appear to permit this.

The Grading Guide lists dozens of different defects in its glossary section, and no grading system would be capable of addressing every possible grouping of defects that might be present on any one comic.

If the 5 basic conditions are thoroughly understood and a common sense reasonableness approach is also taken, it should not be necessary to design or memorize a system with many different grades. Reliable grading, in 19 different grades, can be achieved by use of +, - and/ in conjunction with the 5 basic grades.

Stan Molson, Ontario, Canada

Split Grading

Cheers for Eric Martin. His comments in CBM #65 certainly spoke well for the collectors who have to deal with the pricing resulting from such grades as VG/FN+++. I agree that the 21 point "Gentner" scale is unusable. And, worse, it so lacks objectivity that I am certain any ten Overstreet advisors could be given any book and we would see 10 different grades. Just what is the difference between a book that is VG/FN (between VG+ and FN- on the Gentner scale) and a FN-, other than price. Please, describe the visual differences in a book graded GD+ and a book graded GD/VG.

I can understand the need for a + system to inform buyers that a certain book is better than most Fines, but still not a VF. However, it is not necessary to use a minus at any time. A FN- is a book that is not a FN, at best it is a VG+.

For any grading system to be useful, and successful, it must be simple and relatively easy to master. Dealers seem to want a more and more complex system to allow for pricing flexibility (read higher prices), while collectors want it short, sweet and easy to master.

Jay Higgins, Louisiana

I would agree that "minus" grades (FN-, NM-, etc.) are not very logical. If a book grades less than FN it should probably be called a VG book... perhaps fine-tuned to VG+ if it is extremely high in the VG range. I don't believe that split grades really serve much purpose either, and my commentary on that subject (I vigorously oppose their use) is well-documented in previous issues. However, I think the points you make are very logical. Although the internet and the rumor mill are currently "a buzz" with speculation about a new Overstreet numerical scale, some CBMers may not be aware of the latest proposal. The most recent revision is based on a 10 point scale (instead of the present 100 point scale) in an attempt to simplify the assignment of numerical grades. As a co-originator of the 100 point scale, I can see some of the reasons that have been advanced in support of this change. I do however, have some concerns (from a consumer/collector perspective) about which numbers will be applied to which nomenclature grades. One of the key points of the ongoing debate (as I understand it) is the nomenclature equivalency of 9.0. Many seem to be lobbying to have 9.0 equal VF/NM.

Another contingent (which includes Ye Editor) feels strongly that any grade with a "VF" in it should not break the 9.0 line. I feel strongly that if VF/NM must be used (remembering I still don't feel comfortable with combination grades) it should not be assigned a numerical score higher than 8.8 or 8.9 because for me it seems misleading to consumers). Only time will tell which opinion will shape the future of our hobby... and which is a majority view. Since the ultimate decision as to which approach will be become "official" is Bob Overstreet's, perhaps CBM readers could share their feelings (one way or the other) with Bob so that he could get a better sense of collector opinion. I hope every concerned CBM reader and collector who reads this will take a moment and give Bob feedback on how they feel about (1) the changeover from a 100 point to a 10 point scale numerical grading scale; (2) whether combination grades should be officially recognized on the scale; (3) and lastly, whether VF/NM should be 9.0 or less than 9.0. Your opinion matters, stand up and be counted! Bob O. can be contacted either by E-mail... cbm@gemstonepub.com... or by letter at Gemstone Publishing, 1966 Greenspring Drive, Suite 300, Timonium, MD 21093.

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Ditto fluid in your veins

I thought CBM #63 was well worth the wait! It was a superb issue. What with the 60th anniversary of Superman, this issue helps to celebrate the legacy and the birth of the true superhero. Wayne Boring and Curt Swan's style have stuck with me all of these years. I grew up with those two artists doing Superman, and I can close my eyes and see their images. They defined the "look" of Superman in the '50s and '60s. Those images still linger on.

I also happened to get the current issue of Cowboys & Country and saw an article about collecting Western comics. I see that the author, Shawn Swillinger, consulted you for some of his information. It was a nice little article that I just happened to see. The issue also had an article remembering Roy Rogers. Anyway, I'm glad to see your influence helping to spread collecting comics in a non-comics related magazine. Hope it generated some interest and will lead some people to seek out Comic Book Marketplace.

As for CBM #64, I absolutely loved the two articles about fanzines. Jeff Gelb's interview with Bill Schelly... boy, that brought back a lot of good memories about getting introduced to early fandom. I remember getting my first few issues of Alter Ego, The ComiCollector, and Rocket's Blast. Later on, I got to know the Texas Trio (Larry Herndon, Buddy Saunders, and Howard Keltner), and their great 'zine, Star-Studded Comics. Unfortunately, Larry passed away quite a few years ago, and most recently, Howard. I still see Buddy from time to time whenever I'm down in Dallas. I think that we even got together one time at Larry's house along with Buddy, Howard, L.L. Simpson, and Gary Accord (I'll try to dig up those pictures and send copies to Bill).

Those times in the early '60s were the most fun, I think, that we ever had. The first ever convention in Dallas was one of the most memorable. I bought ECs for a dollar from Tom Reamy. Those were the days!

Even though Jeff Gelb and I have never formally met, we actually worked together on a story for Larry Walczak's fanzine, Comic Feature. We did a story about a character called Blindman. The story was "Find The Nazi!" by James Toren with "pencils" by me and "inking" by Jeff Gelb. Thank goodness my art has improved a thousand times since then. Jeff did a great job with that story and the art he did for an article in that issue. This was back in 1965! Buying all of those fanzines was a lot of fun. They were cheap and fun to produce. Once you got ditto fluid in your veins, you were hooked. I think we all remember the smell. Those ditto and mimeograph machines could be a bit tricky to operate, too.

Mark Burbey's "Fantastic Fanzines" article was great, too! I remember buying a lot of those early publications. I may be looking at things with a little more nostalgia now, but those early 'zines and the first offset 'zines had a rawness and excitement about them. We were all wanting to be involved somehow either through contributions, or LOCs, or just going to some of the early cons and meeting all of the other fans. Just being exposed to collecting and fandom was such an adrenaline rush. We were all a bit starry eyed! The wonder of it all. It's a shame that we all had to grow up and become responsible adults. But look how far we've come! It's been a great ride, so far, since early fandom. Thanks to Jeff and Mark for reminding us of those great times.

Steve Fears, via E-mail

Alberta Collector's Association

CBM #63 was another magnificent issue. Celebrating Superman's 60th was very appropriate. Although past issues of CBM have profiled Superman in a number of articles, #63 gave readers fresh material, which should demonstrate to collectors that there's plenty to say about comic characters.

At our May Alberta Comic Collector's Association meeting we put on a program to honor the icon. We provided a cake with a red, white and blue candle, held a comic auction of Superman items, had members bring interesting Superman memorabilia for display, and sponsored a "Draw Your Version of Superman Contest," with the best/most unique drawings being used as cover art for our club's newsletter. Our guest speaker was a senior member who regaled us with his story of once owning Action #1.

Our comics club, a non-profit organization, has around 70 members and meets nine times per year. Do readers of CBM know of any comics clubs presently in existence in North America that meet on a regular basis? We would like to correspond with them in order to exchange ideas.

Carl Horak, Alberta, Canada

There are many "pods" of of the AACC (American Association of Comicbook Collectors) around the country, as well as many independent clubs. I regularly attend local San Diego meetings with Michael Naiman, Bob Casali, Mick Rabin, Peter Klee, Beth and Rick Holley, Greg Pharis, and others. I'm sure we'd be delighted to correspond with your club. In fact, I invite all comic collector groups and organizations to contact me. Perhaps we could set up a national directory for the mutual benefit of all.

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Pulps and Dime Novels

Have been a reader of Marvel comics since 1969 and have been reading CBM for some time now. I am very interested in the origins, the development and the history of the comic book and I have come across many books which deal with this broad subject.

However, I have been able to find relatively few texts which examine the popular formats which preceded the comic book, namely the dime novels and the pulp magazines. I have read the article on the Platinum Age which appeared in Overstreet #27.

This article examines the dime novel and the pulps in passing. I am also reading the book by Michael Denning entitled Mechanic Accents Dime Novels and Working-Class Culture in America (Verso, 1998, new edition) and I am going to seek out the new book by Frank M. Robinson and Lawrence Davidson entitled Pulp Culture: The Art of Fiction Magazines. However, I have been able to find relatively little else. Perhaps CBM readers could suggest other articles or books on this topic.

Ken Pardey, Hampshire, England

Perhaps they can...

Marvel Mini Books!

First, I would like to say that CBM is, hands down, the number one comics magazine in the business. I have been a regular reader since issue #1. Your insight on the comic book world is both informative and interesting to anyone who has a love for comics.

Can you or your readers out there help me find out more about the smallest comic books ever produced? They are called Marvel Mini Books. They are listed as being printed in 1966 and were only ⅜ x ⅜ in size, and have 50 pages in B&W. There are six issues containing stories about Spider-Man, Captain America, Sgt. Fury, Thor, Hulk, and Millie the Model. They are also very hard to find! I have been searching for these little treasures for many years with no results.

Steve Horne, via E-mail

A wonderful forum

Have the feeling I know the answer posed in Jim Brocius' letter in the latest CBM. Steve Ditko gave his thoughts on the creation of Spider-Man in the May 1990 issue of Robin Snyder's History of Comics. This fanzine started in 1990 and is/was (I haven't gotten an issue in months) a wonderful forum for comic book creators to present their own stories and views—unfiltered and unedited.

Snyder's History of Comics includes creators from the acerbic wit of Robert Kanigher to the philosophical essays by Steve Ditko. Alex Toth, the comics and animation master designer, delights readers with missives written in comic book lettering with side illustrations. Does he ever do anything ordinary? Incidentally, the April 1990 issue contains Bob Haney's account of his involvement with the creation of the Doom Patrol, Metal Men, and Sgt. Rock.

CBM is looking great—keep up the good work. Regards,

Alan Bartholomew, via E-mail

What Age begins and ends when?

Wanted to write a letter and say that I absolutely love your magazine and have greatly increased my collecting interests through it. The issue I want to address is the lack of uniformity that we have at recognizing recent key comics. We all basically acknowledge that Action Comics #1 marks the beginning of the "Golden Age of Comics" and that Showcase #4 marks the beginning of the Silver Age. In contrast, who for me can identify without a doubt the start of the Bronze Age? How about the first comic of the Modern Age? I have a few propositions that I would like to to hear a reaction to.

To me, it appears that the Bronze Age began with either House of Mystery #92 or Conan the Barbarian #1. Each seems eligible due to both the time they were printed and their non-super-hero content.

As for the start of the Modern Age, it seems more difficult to pinpoint a particular book. Many people have cited Dark Knight Returns #1 or Watchmen #1 as the start of the Modern Age. Both books meet the criteria for influential and radical content but seem to fall short in terms of the times in which they were printed. What I mean by this is that by the time these books were printed, it was clear that the Bronze Age had ended many years prior.

So when did the Bronze Age end and the Modern Age begin? I find myself pointing to Daredevil #169! Does anyone see it differently?

Nathan Surget, New Jersey

One interview, one time

For the first time, to my knowledge, we get a response from Steve Ditko on what really happened back in the early Marvel Days? Is there any way we can persuade Mr. Ditko to set the record straight, before it's too late. What with Jack Kirby gone, Steve Ditko is the only hope we have. One interview. One time. Special Ditko Issue. WOW!!!

Bob Pine, via E-mail

It got my vote

The Superman issue is a true masterpiece!!! It's got my vote for an Eisner Award!

Shel Dorf, California

Boring guesses

Regarding the article side bar "Covering Boring and Kaye" the first sentence "DC has published records of cover artwork on Action Comics" is not accurate. Abbeville Press published a book called Superman In Action Comics which has guesses as to the artists involved which were assembled by a network of comic book fans. DC itself has no records. In the recent two volumes of Action Archives many of the same covers are shown with different guesses.

The Abbeville Press book lists Wayne Boring as the cover artist for Action #25-33. Action Archives #2 lists Boring as the artist for Action #25-29 and Fred Ray as the cover artist for Actions #30-33. I don't think either version is correct.

Action #25 is laid out by Joe Shuster. In particular the body position- *(Continued on page 74)*

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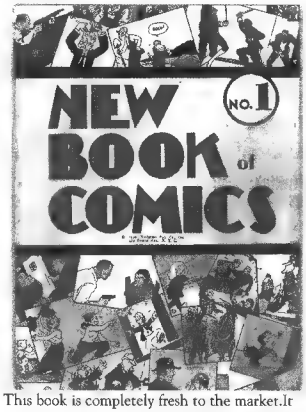
Here's something you don't see everyday;an unrestored Superman 1.Even those fortunate collectors with unlimited budgets can't find one of these. This copy has white pages and great color.**It has never been offered for sale until now.** It does have its drawbacks as well.Cover is detached and has two long tears.Overall grade...Good-. Serious offers considered.

This copy is completely unrestored.It features nice color and good paper quality.Its flaw is the chip in the logo area.While not new to the market it has not traded below $50,000 since being acquired at the Diamond Gallery opening almost four years ago. Unrestored copies are truly scarce in any grade. This is a tremendous opportunity. Grade:VG-.Price $45,000.

In my opinion the greatest esoteric cover.This book is impossible to find.This is the highest grade copy I've ever seen offered for sale.The price may seem high, but when compared to the silly prices being paid for lesser books,its a steal. Grade:FVF. $3,500



This book is completely fresh to the market.It was purchased recently from a eightysomething year old woman.It is very fresh.It has white pages and great color. Grade:FVF. $8,000

Very tough golden age key.First appearance of the Atom.Great color and pages.Overall great eye appeal.Two small glue repairs. Grade:Fine+. $3,500

Completely unrestored.Good pages.Price is way under guide.Grade:GVG. $1,950

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Independents' Days

By Pat S. Calhoun

The early 1980s are renowned in comic book history as an era when a huge number of smaller "independent" companies began publishing comics… many in a black-and-white format with a small print run. After the success of Kevin Eastman and Peter Laird's *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles* caused back-issue prices on that title to soar, dealers began stockpiling anything that looked like it had any chance to become popular and pricey. The boom of course soon went bust as the warehouses filled with close calls and also-rans.

Even so, the rise of the indies changed comics history. However, the spirit of the indies has also been manifested in previous eras of comics history, and the following are all excellent examples of the creator-as-publisher approach and worthwhile books as well.

Get Lost #1 (March 1954) was created by, and perhaps written by, and certainly most of it was drawn by Ross Andru and Mike Esposito. They also produced it as MikeRoss Publications. While it was one of many titles to offer satire after EC's *MAD* became a big seller, it was one of the best. The cover makes good use of the mag's title, playing the double entendre of *Get Lost*—the mag versus "get lost"—vamoose! The opener, "How Dr. Jerkyll Became Mr. Hide," takes some breezy jabs at Stevenson's classic novella and throws in a multitude of gags for good measure.

Ross and Mike also drew the second yarn, "Strain," jibing this time at the foibles of horse opera and the western genre. In the third tale Mickey Spillane takes the rap in "Me? the Verdict," featuring Sledge Hammer, private eye. It's a hilarious send-up, full of booze and big-breasted blondes, with art by Tony Mortellaro.

For the finale Ross and Mike teamed as Robsjon Gluck to illustrate the space saga of Four-Flush Gordon, a look at sci-fi from the snide side. It's very funny.

Andru and Esposito were also involved as creators and sometimes-publishers of the long-running horror title, *Mr. Mystery*, which won fame with the seventh issue—containing one of the classic comics SF stories, "The Brain Bats of Venus," by Basil Wolverton.

As to how a couple of comic creators could become publishers: "…the distributor advanced the publisher twenty-five percent of the total income on a one-hundred percent sale. This advance was paid when the books were shipped from the printer to local wholesalers around the country. We assigned that money to the printer, who would then pay the engraver…. Since a comic would usually sell a minimum of

On the spectacular cover of Simon and Kirby's Bullseye #3 (Dec 1954) the Western Sharpshooter lives the nightmare that comes with the target branded onto his chest.

Andru & Esposito came up with a clever cover for Get Lost #1 (Mar 1954) which surely coaxed customers into reaching for it amidst the flood of parody mags on the newsstand.

Heroes, Inc. (1969), Wally Wood's bold attempt at an "adult" comic, may not have "business success" but was still one of the most sophisticated superhero books of the Silver Age.

30%, everybody was happy. Until the profits rolled in, Mainline would be required to invest in only the editorial material…" That's Joe Simon (in his *The Comic Book Makers*) writing about the company that he formed with Jack Kirby, Mainline Publications.

As an example of graphic storytelling with Joe and Jack at their peak, consider *Bullseye* #3 (December 1954). This ish even offers a two-page origin recap, and it's a dilly! Not only is the young Bullseye already a superb marksman, trained by his grandfather, Deadeye Dick, but when Dick is killed by the treacherous Yellow Snake, the lad steps into the fray and the round ends with Yellow Snake branding a target on the boy's chest—for the moment when the child is old enough for Yellow Snake to drive a spear through it.

The two actual Bullseye stories are pretty cool: the first one takes place in a lost prehistoric valley with pterodactyls in it, and the second has some fun pseudo-supernatural stuff as Bullseye and his native friend (Long Drink) scare some crooks out of a ghost town.

Simon's Mainline was an indirect victim of the comic censorship movement. EC was one of the most heavily censored companies, and after their books were blackballed, the negative financial effects spilled over to their distributor, Leader News… which, in turn, undid Mainline.

These two examples from the mid 1950s aren't to suggest there weren't earlier indies—there were, and the Silver Age had some too. For instance, *Heroes, Inc.* was a 1969 project spearheaded by the talented comic artist Wally Wood. Interestingly, *Heroes, Inc.* was not Code-approved as it was designed to be sold at military base PXs. And although the self-publishing creator-owned effort fell short somewhere down the line, it was certainly not in the quality of the contents—basically snazzy superhero strips with a slightly more adult approach and truly awesome art from Wood, Steve Ditko, and Ralph Reese.

A bright spot in *Heroes, Inc.*, Cannon is a secret agent who was captured and brainwashed by the Commies. Subjected to extreme reconditioning back in the USA, he lost the capacity to feel emotions, and as a coldly-logical merciless "machine" he takes on the most dangerous of missions without fear. Here he is assigned to go kill a young woman taken by the Reds who as assistant to a top defense scientist has valuable knowledge—too valuable to to let the enemy extract it from her. Of course he ends up rescuing her and blowing up the Red base: same old thing but done right and Ditko's pencils with Wood inks are a treat.

Wood's Misfits, a really good superhero team, also make *Heroes, Inc.* worthy of note to collectors. Mystra the telepathic android, Shag the humanoid rodent from another solar system, and Glomb the giant rocklike mutant designed to explore Jupiter and withstand the high gravity but never sent there, make an appealing threesome, and this ten-pager tells how they came together to defeat an alien invasion. Woody inked Ralph Reese's pencils on this one—also a super team!

The five-page Dragonella has a beautiful young woman wandering around with her friendly dragon and searching for her "Prince Charming" while the dragon keeps thinking it should be him. It's fun—as an old TV series put it—a "fractured fairy tale."

Two ways in which these books differ from the 1980's indies are that these were done by seasoned comics pros rather than amateurs trying to get started, and that (at least for the two mid 1950's books) back then it was unfeasible to produce low (less than 250,000) print runs. But all three are fine examples of the true… spirit of independents!

Pat Calhoun has been collecting, researching and appreciating comic books since the early 1960s, and is a nationally recognized comic book historian. Originally a Coronadan, Pat and his family now reside in Santa Rosa.

COMING NEXT MONTH IN CBM

Spider-Man interviews Stan the Man Lee!

plus **CBM welcomes Mark Evanier!**

By Michelle Nolan

Sports Success & Film Failure

The origins of *True Sport Picture Stories* and *Movie Comics* are shrouded in mystery... and require considerable detective work. And what's more fun than doing comic book detective work?

Have you ever looked at a comic title and wondered why it did or did not succeed? I've often asked those questions about old comics, but the answers are usually elusive. This time around I'm asking questions about two of the lesser-known titles of the entire Golden Age.

Street & Smith's *True Sport Picture Stories* is one of the more difficult titles of the Golden Age for a completist. It ran 50 issues from 1940-1949, including the first four issues under the title of *Sport Comics*, and several of those 50 issues are rarely seen. I've managed to acquire 32 of them, including all four issues of *Sport Comics* and the first issue after the title change to *True Sport Picture Stories*.

Produced by Fiction House, *Movie Comics* ran only four issues, from December 1946 through an undated 1947 issue. (This title, by the way, is not to be confused with the even scarcer six-issue run of *Movie Comics* of 1939-1940 from National Comics.) I've been fortunate enough to locate all four of the Fiction House run.

Both titles represent minor milestones in comic book history, for different reasons.

Let's start with *True Sport Picture Stories*. This title is one of those rarities—a comic with a publishing history spanning the entire comic book operation of the company.

Technically, for Street & Smith this is true only with *The Shadow*, which was the company's first comic (#1 is dated March 1940). *The Shadow* ran regularly until the company abandoned comics late in 1949. *Sport Comics* #1, however, is an undated 1940 issue, as are the other two Street & Smith titles that began in 1940—*Doc Savage* and *Bill Barnes*. All four 1940 S&S titles are

The first movie adaptation of the radio thriller Big Town was featured as the cover story on Movie Comics #1 (Dec 1946). Five years later, (1951-58) DC Comics began publishing its 50-issue run of Big Town. The popular radio show also became a TV hit during part of that period.

taken directly from the pulps—and the S&S *Sports Story Magazine* was the longest-running sports pulp of all.

I suspect that *Sports Comics* #1, with a cover illustration of Baseball Hall-of-Famer Lou Gehrig as both boy and man, hit the stands late in the summer. There is no advertising in it other than the publisher's own, including an ad on the back cover for the S&S *Football Yearbook*, "on sale August 30th."

The inside back cover features a full-page ad for *Bill Barnes* #1, adjacent to a full-page ad for *Shadow Comics*, which plugs a new character, The Hooded Wasp. Since The Hooded Wasp made his debut in *Shadow* #7 (November 1940), *Sport Comics* #1 probably ties with *Bill Barnes* #1 for the second Street & Smith title, with *Doc Savage* perhaps coming at about the same time in 1940 (the *Overstreet Comic Book Price Guide* lists *Doc Savage* #1 as May 1940, but Howard Keltner's index correctly lists it as undated).

One of the two issues of the title with dramatic "sports crime" covers, True Sport Picture Stories Vol. 3 #11 (Jan/Feb 1947) features cover art by Bob Powell who contributed a great deal of excellent work in the last three years of the title.

This is a good time to note a correction, since I also should have notified the *Price Guide* of a correction for its comprehensive and entertaining list of historic firsts in comics. I feel that *Sports Comics* #1 should be listed as the first sports comic title instead of Harvey's *Champion Comics* #2 (there was no #1). On the contrary, *Champion Comics* was a typical early anthology, and not a very good one until 1941, with characters like Liberty Lads, Neptina Queen of the Deep, Jungleman and the Blazing Scarab. The only sports feature in it was "The Champ," billed as "the most distinguished athlete in the history of Midwest College." Nor was Fiction House's *Fight Comics*, which began in January 1940, a sports comics since it contained mostly non-sports stories.

JANUARY-FEBRUARY 1947
TRUE
VOL. 3 NO. 11
SPORT
PICTURE STORIES 10
News
FINAL EDITION
DEATH SCORES A TOUCHDOWN
BILL COMPTON, STAR HALF BACK OF THE CHAMPION BUFFALOES KILLED AS HE CROSSES GOAL LINE TO CLINCH PENNANT

By the way, Street & Smith sometimes advertised its early features in a way I have never seen any other publisher do. The firm actually listed how many panels its star feature consisted of! Thus, the ad for *Shadow Comics* in *Sports Comics* #1, plugs (in big red letters) "70 pictures of The Shadow."

One of the most fascinating aspects of Golden Age comics is how different so many of them seem from each other! Can you imagine plugging the actual number of panels a story featured? Perhaps this harkens back to the pulp tradition of often listing the number of words in a story. (When I first saw the old *Amazing Stories* pulps as a child, I always used to ask myself, "Now why would anyone care about knowing how many words are in a story?")

At any rate, what makes *True Sport Picture Stories* highly unusual in Golden Age history is that it seldom carried more than one or two consecutive issues with the same format of story lengths, story types, black and white pages, art content, etc. It's almost as though it had a dozen or more editors. That's how different this title became throughout its decade-long history. That's not obvious, of course, unless you've just reviewed 32 issues!

The unpredictable format makes *True Sport Picture Stories* an even more unlikely candidate for success in my book. But succeed it must have, or it would not have lasted 50 issues. Readers literally never knew what to expect in this title. Someday, after I acquire all 50, I'd like to do an index of all the features it carried, since unlike most sports comics, it did not dwell only on mainstream sports or superstars.

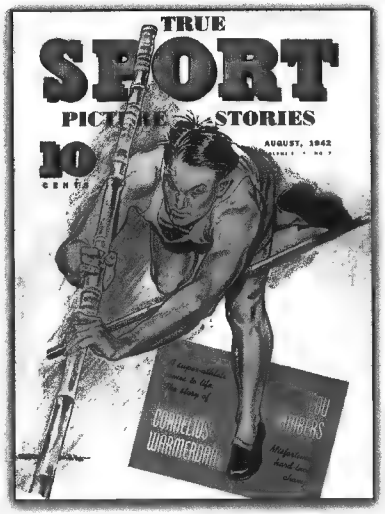
The first four issues, under the *Sport Comics* title, were similar. They carried (in order) a 21-page life history of Lou Gehrig, a 31-page history of boxer Gene Tunney, a 27-page strip on five rookie baseball stars, and a 30-page history of Notre Dame football coach Frank Leahy (who is one of the most fascinating people in the history of college athletics.)

However, unlike most of the issues of *True Sport Picture Stories*, the four issues of *Sport Comics* carried fictional characters. All four featured the boxing character Dude Emory. The first two issues featured baseball start Lew Young (taken directly from the pulps). The first issue also included the only appearances of the baseball character Marty Mathews (what would sport be without alliteration?) and the "Bamboo Kid" a college pole vaulter.

Sports Comics #3 (August 1941) is in my opinion the scarcest of the four issues. It's also the most fascinating, since it featured the stories of rookies Phil Rizzuto, Gerry Priddy, Lou Novikoff, Lou Stringer, and Pete Reiser.

The only one of the five to achieve long-lasting stardom was Rizzuto, the shortstop on so many of the great Yankee teams of the 1940s and '50s. Reiser, however, probably would have become a Hall-of-Famer like Rizzuto had he not suffered so many injuries running into fences. In contrast, Priddy, Stringer and Novikoff (well-known as "The Mad Russian" in the old Pacific Coast League) were minor league stars who were major league journeymen at best.

In fact, Reiser was a rookie in 1940, not 1941 like the others, but then comics never let a fact get in the way of a good story, did they? Rizzuto and Reiser enjoyed outstanding seasons in 1941, but the other three were busts—Stringer batted .246, Novikoff .241 and Priddy .213, which would have qualified them for nobody's all-rookie team, much less stardom.



Cornelius Warmerdam, the first 15-foot pole vaulter in history, is featured in True Sport Picture Stories #8 (Aug 1942, though incorrectly listed as #7 in tiny type on the cover). Many track and field followers still consider him the greatest ever, since he used the old bamboo-style poles.

With issue #5 (February 1942), *Sport Comics* became *True Sport Picture Stories* and the fictional characters largely disappeared. The first issue of *True Sport* is one of the great unsung gems in the entire hobby, with a wonderful 32-page story on Joe DiMaggio and his amazing 56-game hitting streak in 1941 (which may well stand forever). *The Overstreet Price Guide* lists this one at $28 in Good, making it one of the great steals of the Golden Age. By the way, none of the remaining 45 issues of *True Sport Picture Stories* guides for more than $15 in Good, making this an eminently affordable (and historically interesting) series.

The 68-page issues, which lasted through 1943, usually featured a well-written but often raggedly illustrated life story in the first half of the book and two or three shorter life stories in the second half. Several of them featured covers by Willard Mullin, a nationally syndicated newspaperman who was perhaps the greatest sports artist of all time. The covers were often the best thing about *True Sport Picture Stories*.

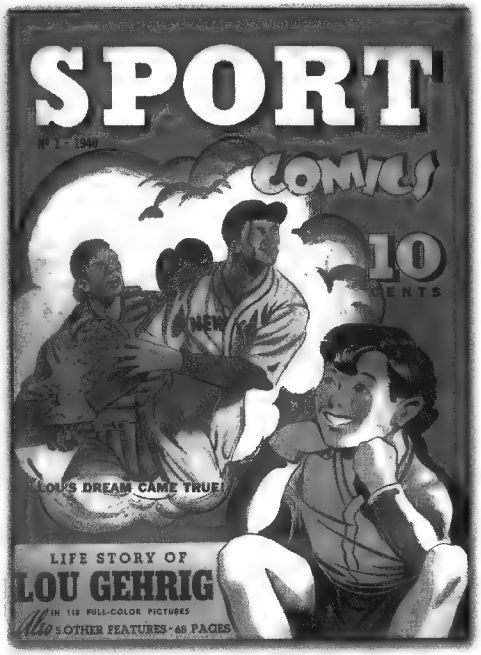
In the 1940s, unlike today, boxing and track and field were huge in the sports world. Boxing and track stories probably appeared more often than anything else in *True Sport Picture Stories* along with baseball and football.

The cover of #6 (April 1942) sports the outrageous pun "Billy Connfidence" about boxing champion Billy Conn. Issue #8 (August 1942, incorrectly listed as #7 on the cover) features a fabulous Mullin cover of Cornelius Warmerdam, who is still probably the greatest pole vaulter of all time, considering he was the first man to clear 15 feet—with a bamboo pole! Besides, I'm biased, since my father (who was a high school track star) knew Warmerdam.

As you can see, if you love sports history, these are wonderful comics.

Beginning with the 60-page issues in 1944, which quickly became the standard 52 pages, you literally never knew what you'd find in *True Sport Picture Stories*. Much of the space was devoted to "how to" features and football play charts, along with as many as 16 black and white pages featuring newspaper photos. And many of the features were short, in contrast to the long, involved life stories featured in the early issues.

Several of these later issues are fun, but many of them are pretty pedestrian, too. Almost all the features were drawn in the style of the cartoonists of the 1920s and '30s. I suspect that of all the comic book publishers, Street & Smith was the most "out of touch" with regard to what was emerging as the modern comic book style, as best represented by the increasingly polished publications of Dell and DC.



The first real sports comic, Sports Comics #1 (1940, no month), featured the life story of Lou Gehrig, who the year before had seen his record streak of 2,130 games ended by a mysterious illness known as ALS. That illness, which killed him in 1941, now bears his name. Baltimore's Cal Ripken, whose streak ended recently, surpassed Gehrig's record and wound up playing 2,632 games in a row.

One of my favorite issues of *True Sport Picture Stories* is Vol. 2, #12 (April 1945), on which the cover declares "The 4-minute mile is possible." It took nine years to prove that correct, though, when Roger Bannister broke the barrier in 1954. Another great feature in that issue is the verbal battle between college coach Clair Bee and professional coach Eddie Gottlieb about the merits of their versions of basketball. Bee, then the coach at Long Island University, three years later began the 23-book saga of Chip Hilton, the greatest fictional sports character of the 1950s and a worthy successor to Street & Smith's dime novel hero Frank Merriwell.

Bob Powell, who did so much nifty art for Street & Smith, Harvey, Magazine Enterprises and several other companies, contributed heavily in the last three years of *True Sport Picture Stories*, beginning with Vol. 3, #10 (November/December 1946). In that issue and in Vol. 3 #11 (January/February 1947), Powell produced both the covers and story art for the fictional tales of "Murder at the World Series" and "Death Scores a Touchdown." These two stories were a radical departure from the title's generally tame covers and all-fact format.

They were apparently inspired by the growth of crime comics at the time. But, obviously, *True Sport Picture Stories* could not continue to present stories of imaginary athletic crime on its covers in every issue! (After all, the infamous National Basketball Association was in its infancy. Can you imagine what we'd see today?)

Powell continued to do the covers *(Continued on page 79)*

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Call or send for my Free Catalog. I am also author of: The Private Collector's Manual For Grading Comic Books ©1996 $5.00 a copy.

Fantastic Four
#48 Very Fine/Near Mint $900.00
with off-white pages. Book is flat, clean, bright & glossy, with no spine roll. Nice, silver staples. Excellent spine, with four small (1/8") stress lines. Straight edges & sharp corners. Inside cover primarily off-white. Back cover clean, off-white & attractive. Structurally & aesthetically a beautiful book, one heartbeat away from NM-! Nicest copy I've seen regionally, here in Houston, Texas.

A.Spider-Man
#13 Very Fine- $475.00
w/pretty, off-white cover. The all-important center portion of front cover is clean, off - white & unsoiled, without yellowing or tanning. Book is flat with no spine roll. Nice staples. Minor wear right along edge of spine; little1/16" to 1/8" stress lines. Straight, sharp edges. Creamy pgs. Back cover clean & attractive. Inside cover has light tan edge.

Fantastic Four
#4 Good/Very Good $300.00
I'm so glad to talk about this Historic issue of Sub-Mariner's first Silver Age appearance. My favorite comic book ever since I first saw it on the barber's coffee table as a kid in the early sixties. I recently upgraded to F/VF, so I'll sell you my low grade copy; still very collectible with it's bright, colorful cover and most pages off-white! A lot of spine wear but cover attached at both staples. 1/2" split of cover at base of spine area and a small piece out there also. Usual structural wear of low grade, at edges & corners. This is a fun, fun reading copy to own!

A.Spider-Man
#16 Very Fine w/light stamp $250.00
Whoever originally put this now faded store stamp of "Paid" on the cover obviously didn't want Daredevil and Spider-Man fighting each other, because he or she placed it right between both heroes. Probably wanted to show 'em they were already paid and that it wasn't necessary to fight over the Ringmaster. Pretty book with clean, off-white cover that is not soiled or yellowed out. Nice, off-white pages & back cover. Book is flat, without spine roll. Minor spine stress wear. Minor wear at edges & corners.

A.Spider-Man
#12 Very Fine $400.00
Very nice spine with silver staples. Book is flat with no spine roll. Colorful, bright cover. Nice edges. Creamy pages but some have very light tan edge. Back cover clean, off-white & attractive but has a minor, light surface crease near top corner. No major creases on book.

A.Spider-Man
#17 Very Fine- $425.00
Book is clean, flat & colorful with no spine roll. Nice staples. Minor stress wear on spine. No major creases. Nice edges. Back cover clean & attractive. Pages creamy but some have light tan edge, as does inside cover. Bright, pretty cover.

A.S. # 8 Fine+ w/off-white pages; bright cover $250.00
A.S. #15 Fine/Very Fine w/b.c. creasg (call me) $300.00
A.S. #27 Very Fine+ w/off-white pages; pretty! $215.00
Conan ... #1 Very Fine nice book, pretty cover $165.00
Avengers #10 Very Fine off-white, clean cover $120.00
X-Men #29 Very Fine/Near Mint off-white c/pgs $100.00
F.Four #25 Fine+ colorful medium grade book $100.00

Notes: Since 1989, I've never assigned a grade of solid NM to any of my Silver Age books; only up to VF/NM. I've never once had a book returned to me due to overgrading. One time, a book was damaged in transit by U.P.S., and thus rejected by my customer, but not for overgrading. Check out my grading Manual, free with purchase!

The Riddle of Batman & Raven

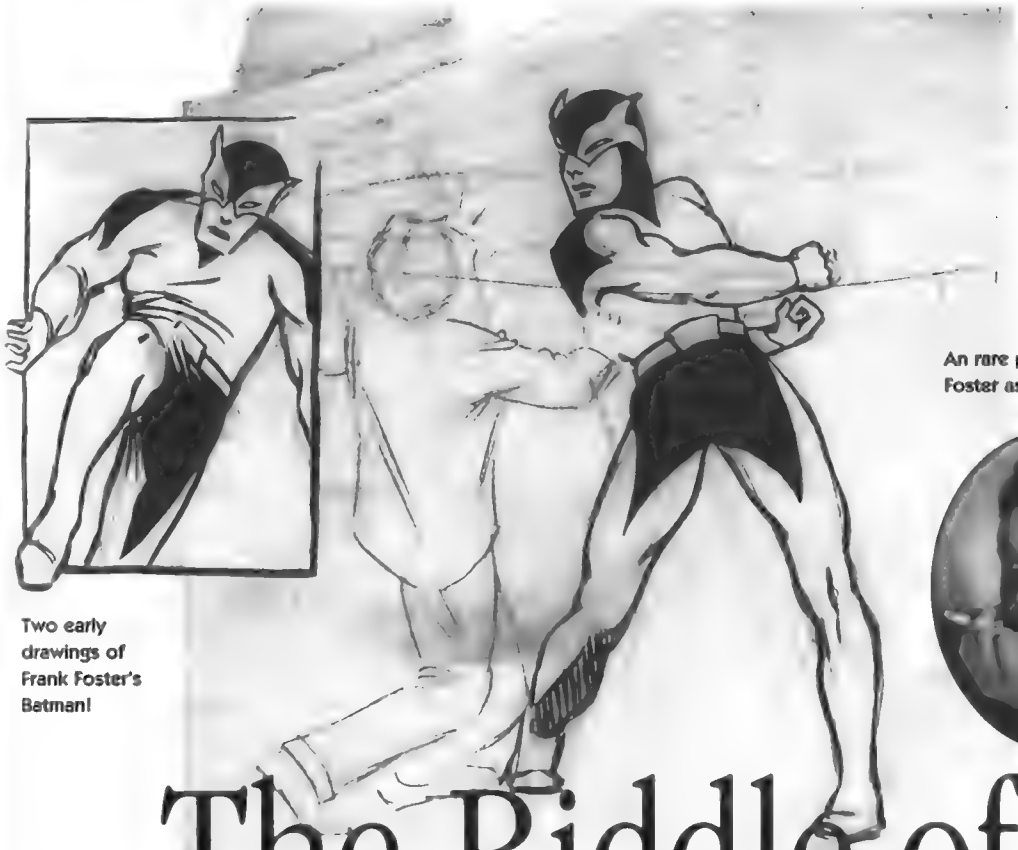
BY WILL MURRAY

One of the most famous Batman stories, "The First Batman," (*Detective Comics*, #235, September, 1956) told the tale of Bruce Wayne's astonishing discovery that his father had once worn a bat-costume similar to his own to a masquerade ball. It was an electrifying moment in the life of the Batman, the revelation that he was *not* the first Batman.

Frank Foster Jr. knows how Bruce Wayne must have felt. His own father, he believes, created the original Batman—ten years before Bob Kane's version debuted in *Detective Comics* #27. Interviewed in the cool comfort of his Cape Cod basement home office, surrounded by his father's nautical watercolors, Foster, a retired commercial photographer, recalls first hearing about the prototypal Batman when he was four years old in 1940.

"I remember my parents telling me about it before I ever saw the *Batman* comic. My father said he drew the Batman and showed me the drawings. He said he showed it to people in New York, and they stole his ideas and he never got a penny."

It's an amazing, even stunning claim, that contradicts the admittedly murky lore surrounding the origin of the Caped Crusader, who debuted



Two early drawings of Frank Foster's Batman!

An rare photo of Frank Foster as a young man.

Riddle of Batman & Raven

in early 1939.

"A father does not tell his four year old child that he's been cheated!" Foster says firmly. "It was a curious thing for me when I was a kid. Not of any great significance, particularly. When I was of comic book age, I'd say, 'My father invented Batman.' The kids would say, 'Oh, sure.' The drawings were *always* around."

From a long architechural file drawer, he pulls out the original concept drawings to what his family has always believed is the one, true, original Batman. The ancient piece of Strathmore board is yellowed, its edges chipped by time. Across the front are three India ink shots of a character caparazoned in a strikingly stylized superhero costume: in action, decking a lightly penciled figure with a roundhouse right cross; standing in a nonchalant pose with one arm resting on a casually lifted leg; and climbing in through a window in classic superhero style. And below that, a three-quarters-view head shot of the unmasked mystery man with a strangely batlike left ear and a sharp jawline that smacks of both the Golden Age Batman and Dick Tracy!

Foster flips the board to the other side to reveal a pencil sketch of an exotic-featured woman. The words "1932 Village" are visible and below that, two startling names in bold script:

Batman

Nightwing

Asked about the significance of these names, Foster digs out a deposition his father gave in 1975 and indicates the explanation Frank Foster Sr. offered at that time:

"Oh, I guess that was a night wing, or something like that... That's just some sort of alternate thought I had at the moment, and then I checked off Batman because I thought that was a better name."

Foster seemed oblivious to the electrifying significance of the second name. Nightwing was the name a grown-up Robin would take in 1984 for his adult crime-fighting alter ego during his stint with the Teen Titans.

Could this be true? Could an obscure aspiring cartoonist have created Batman before Bob Kane and Bill Finger conceived the Caped Crusader in 1939, *and* prefigured the seemingly-unique name of Nightwing?

The story of Frank Dinsmore Foster, Sr.—who died in 1995—and his Batman is a fascinating and intriguing one. It might have been lost forever except for his son's determination. In 1975, inspired by a newspaper story about Batman artist Lew Schwartz, he pursuaded a reluctant Frank Sr. to see a Boston law firm in an effort to explore possible legal remedies.

"I didn't push him," the son recalls. "We *made* him come up to deal with my company attorney at Shapiro & Isreal. I said, 'Everyone's fascinated when you tell them the story—at first.' But when they say, 'Well, what are we going to do with this?' They agreed to give it a little bit of a run so my father came up—at my insistence. It wasn't that he didn't want to do it. My parents gave up on this many, many years ago. They were too busy trying to put food on the table. But then they had the *Batman* television series, and all that stuff."

The elder Foster's saga begins in the late 1920s when he was an aspiring young musician attending the Designer's Art Scool in Boston.

"And at that school I became very friendly with Al Capp," Foster Sr. told his lawyers in 1975. "We went to school together and were quite close. I was studying fine arts—I was only interested in fine arts, and Al has always been interested in comics, and he asked me at one point during our school days if I would be the artist for a strip if he sold it. And I had no interest in it. But he talked me into a partial interest."

It was during this period that Foster remembered conceiving Batman, and another superheroic character.

"He got me interested enough to make some ideas up. And it seems to me that in those days, and even now, that most of the strips were heroes of the day—such as, flying through the sky during the day and doing good deeds and so forth and so on—and I thought, well, why couldn't that be done at night? Have a good guy do stuff at night. So, I started working, just briefly, very briefly, not too seriously, with Al Capp, and cooking up a couple of ideas. I had many others, but I kept these for nostalgia and I thought they were the two that probably would be the most applicable to selling at that time. This was in the '20s. So I cooked up these ideas, and then just discussed them and then sort of put them away for long, because I was studying fine art—you know, I was studying painting and drawing and so forth and so on, so I really had no definite interest in it. And so Al and I went our separate ways. One of the things was Batman, and the other was Raven."

Out from the architectural drawings file cabinet Frank Jr. removes another piece of aging Strathmore. This one is an incomplete comics page entitled 'The Raven.' It depicts a masked man in a business suit called the Raven, who commands a group of crime-fighting subordinates consisting of two couples, Pete and Nancy, and Brent and Naja. The style, automobile, and even the free-floating lettering suggests the late 1920s or early '30s. It is undated.

"I'm positive that I drew it in the '20s," Foster

The riddle of Frank Foster's Batman adds a new and controversial wrinkle to the comic book history timeline...

Sr. says in his deposition. When questioned on the Batman board date, he begins to say, "The reason for the 1932 on there is because—"

Unfortunately, the lawyers interrupt him and that explanation went unrecorded. However, a separate statement by Foster's wife Ruth, stipulates:

"I met Frank in 1927 while he was studying art at Designer's Art School in Boston. We were married on July 15, 1932, the year after finishing his studies. It was most likely that the original drawings of 'BATMAN' were executed during the latter part of his attendance at Art School (1930-31) as I know they were done before our marriage."

According to Frank Foster's own recollection, he moved from Boston to Greenwich Village in New York in 1931 or '32, and showed his ideas around with no result. Ruth Foster adds:

"All of his drawings were put aside from 1932 to September 1937, during which time all of his efforts were made in trying to support me and our son (Frank D. Foster III) who was born on December 25, 1935. His business failed, and in September 1937 we moved *(Cont. on page 56)*

THE RAVEN CALLS THE INNER COUNCIL BEFORE HIM THAT NIGHT
WE CAN WAIT NO LONGER, THIS MENACE SHALL BE REMOVED TO-NIGHT
PETE AND NANCY WERE FIRST TO

ALL DRAWINGS AND CONCEPTS © 1998 FRANK FOSTER

An original four-panel strip of Frank Foster's Raven.

The Riddle of Batman & Raven!

The Evidence!

When I first read the story of Frank Foster II and his alternate version of Batman in the *Boston Globe* I was frankly skeptical. The idea of someone coming up with a superheroic character named Batman in the late '20s and early '30s seems ridiculously far-fetched. This was before Superman, even before Lee Falk's costumed Phantom, who debuted in 1936.

But it's not impossible. Human Bats were in the popular consciousness throughout the '20s and early '30s. Both Mary Roberts Reinhart's *The Bat* and Bram Stoker's *Dracula* were popular stage productions in the '20s. And both were filmed. In fact, *Dracula* and *The Bat Whispers* (whose batlike villain Bob Kane cites as a partial inspiration for his Batman, along with Zorro and a Leonardo DaVinci sketch of a batlike flying machine) hit the theatres the same year: 1931. Either or both might have triggered imaginative associations in Frank Foster's young mind. For that matter, 1931 was the year The Shadow first debuted in the pulps. Author Walter Gibson often described him as batlike, especially when clinging to walls in his ebony cloak.

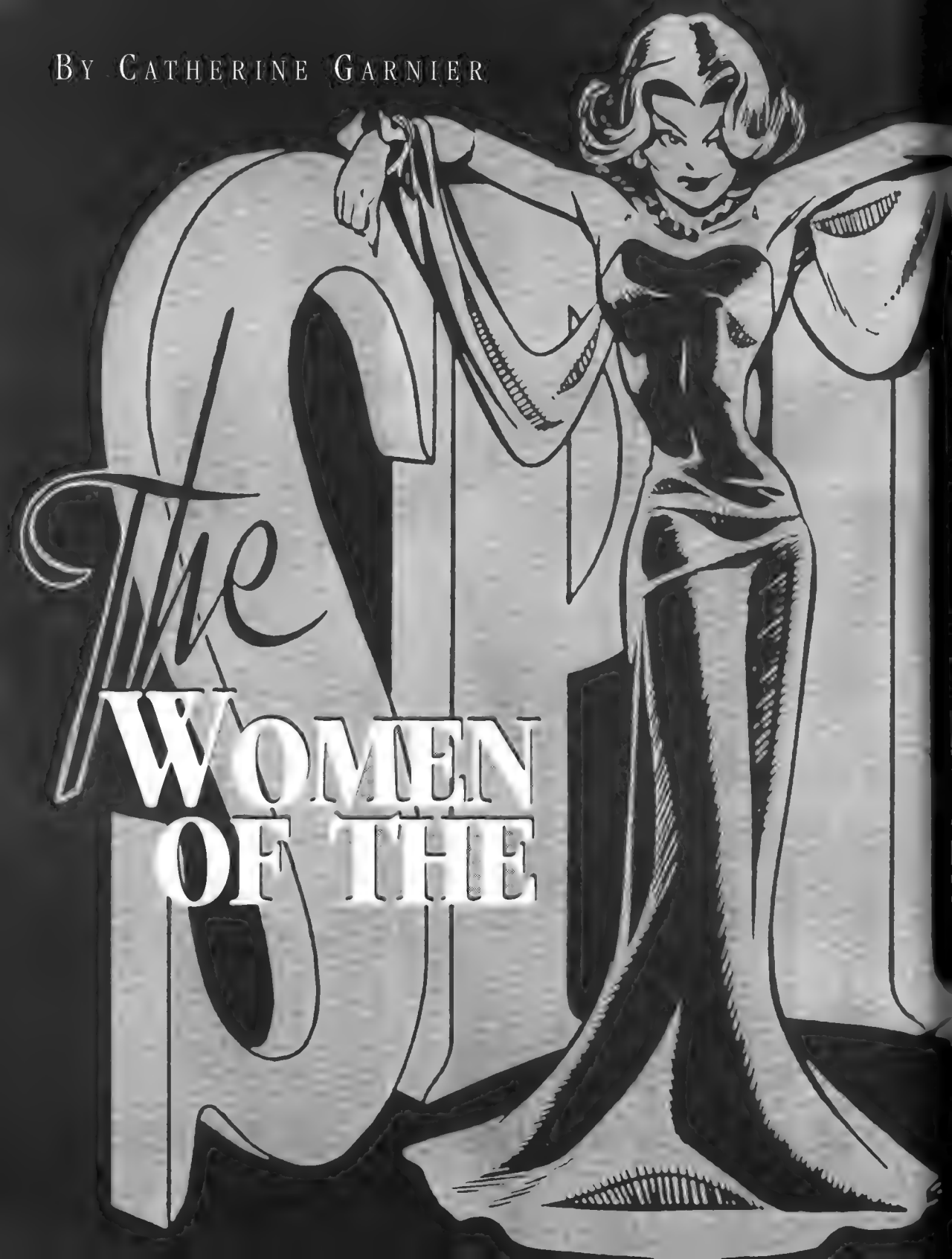
And you don't have to look far for a case of uncanny parallelism very much like this. Two months after Batman debuted, the Black Bat premiered in the July 1939 *Black Book Detective*, a pulp magazine. Both were crimebusters who dressed in bat-eared cowls with batwing cloaks. In the dark, they might have been twins! And although Batman reached print first, the Black Bat was created before him—in late 1938. All during the 1930s, the pulps are rife with batlike villains. The Spider once battled a villain called the Bat-Man in a 1935 issue of *The Spider* pulp. So the core idea was not so far-fetched.

Could this be a hoax? I doubt it. The art is faithful to the period, and the Strathmore board and ink have been authenticated as pre-World War II. The Batman drawings are rendered on the "tooth" side of the board, indicating the art dates back to at least 1932, if not before. And if Frank Foster had counterfeited his Batman in, say, 1940—wouldn't he have given his version a scalloped cloak, or bat insignia, to cement the connection? The only bat elements on Frank Foster's character are the stylized batlike cowl ears and the abstract black patches suggesting batwing-points. You have to look at the verso side of the drawing to know this strange superhero was called Batman. He could just as easily been called Catman!

Is the name too much of a coincidence? Not really. Consider: In British military circles, a "batman" was an officer's valet. In that same period there were barnstorming acrobats called batmen who wore flying suits outfitted with batlike leather membranes stretched between arms and legs, as well as between their legs. After wingwalking, they would glide back to earth like human bats, pulling their ripcords at the last possible minute.

(Cont. on page 56)

By Catherine Garnier



The Women of the

RIT
TSK, TSK...
SENDING A BOY TO
DO A MAN'S JOB!

There is, however, one aspect in which Eisner throws off this cloak of realism and allows for characters that *are* larger than life, some of whom reappear throughout the life of the strip—the women. Ah, the women . . .

CHERCHE LA FEMME!

Most classic costumed heroes perform their heroics in a world populated by cadres of super-powered superheroes and equally enhanced supervillains. Batman has his Joker, Superman his Lex Luthor. In this, as in so many other elements of its construction, Will Eisner's the Spirit is remarkable. With a few notable exceptions—The Squid, The Octopus, Mr. Carrion—the forces of evil with which The Spirit tangles are simply common street thugs, empowered with no more than fists, cunning, and a .45. These thugs are all but faceless, interchangeable, and rarely appear as recurring characters. By the same token, the "good guys" of Central City are equally normal—no Legion of Superheroes, just plain folks like Commissioner Dolan, Patrolman Sam Klink, and the Spirit's street-wise assistants Ebony and Sammy. These characters dutifully serve Eisner's end of telling human, realistic detective stories, letting the content and execution be the true stars of the work.

There is, however, one aspect in which Eisner throws off this cloak of realism and allows for characters that *are* larger than life, some of whom reappear throughout the life of the strip—the women. Ah, the women…

The pages of *The Spirit* were adorned over the years with a wealth of beautiful women. With eyes like saucers and hourglass figures to put Jane Russell to shame, these broads also had brains, ambition, and were often more than a match for the masked crime fighter. This is by no means a comprehensive list—that's a book unto itself!—but included here are most of the dames who figured as primary characters in at least one Spirit Section. First appearance dates are in parentheses.

GOOD(?) GIRLS:

No shrinking violets these, the Spirit's gal pals rarely wait for the daring rescue. They are independent and determined—but occasionally need the assistance of the masked one when they get in over their heads.

Ellen Dolan (6/9/40): The long-suffering commissioner's daughter is a stalwart companion to the Spirit, but, try as she might, she never quite gets her man. Contrary to her damsel-in-distress image, however, she does often aid in catching the villain, especially if the crook is a beautiful woman vying for the Spirit's affections. Tired of waiting around for the Spirit to make an honest woman of her, she eventually turns her attentions to running for, and being elected, Mayor of Central City.

Peppi Tamale (1/19/41): Ellen's ex-fiancé Homer Creep finally finds marital bliss with this Cuban cutie—at least until her brother, Pancho de Bool catches up with them.

Silk Satin (3/16/41): Satin begins her career as a jewel thief, but is exonerated of her criminal past because of her exemplary work as an agent for the British Secret Service. The Spirit seems to have more than a passing fancy for Satin, but she always seems engaged—either by work, a husband, or looking out for the interests of her stepdaughter, Hildie.

Nylon Rose (3/17/46): A lighter version of Satin, this lascivious U.S. Federal Agent seems more interested in landing the Spirit than the criminal she is supposed to be after. She exhibits this by going wild in his presence, emitting a series of snorts and "hubba-hubbas" and planting big smooches on him while he is tied up and helpless.

Silken Floss, M.D. (3/2/47): Like most of the good girls, this brainy and bespectacled nuclear physicist/surgeon is a foil to Ellen's affections, especially when she dupes the Spirit into marrying her! He gets himself disentangled, but later is in Silken's debt when she cures him of blindness.

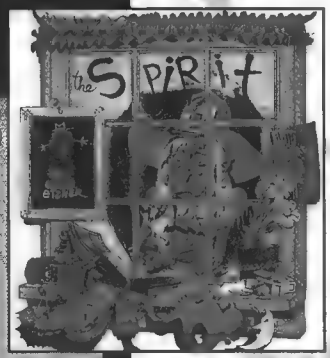
Sparrow Fallon (1/11/48): This shy bookkeeper takes the rap for her embezzling father and lands in the pokey. The Spirit and a past love help to exonerate her.

Castanet (1/25/48): This hot tamale falls in with The Octopus for the promise of the treasure in a lost civilization.

Widder Walker (7/11/48): Dolan betroths himself to this distinguished broad, but the wedding bells are silenced when he finds out she is working for a crooked councilman.

Tiny Buttrix (10/14/48): In her first appearance, this spunky gal enlists the Spirit's (unneeded) protection from a mysterious villain who turns out to be her long-lost father. Later in the story "Leap Year," she bucks convention when she pursues the affections of Dolan over The Spirit.

"Aunt" Mathilda Dolan (6/9/46): With the help of Pool's Toadstool Facial Cream, Ellen's battle ax Aunt lands herself a husband, but she throws him back when she learns he was only after the family connection.



REPEAT OFFENDERS:

(Some of the bad girls were so good, one story about them just wasn't enough.)

The Black Queen

(6/16/40): Eisner established his *femme* fatale type early on when she strolled onto the scene in the third Spirit section as a mob mouthpiece who has no trouble keeping her cronies out of the slammer. Later, she is revealed as the head of a vast underground criminal organization, and takes to appearing in a tight black costume complete with headdress—probably the closest Eisner ever came to creating a costumed villain.

P'Gell (10/6/46): Probably the most famous (or infamous) femme, P'Gell used her considerable feminine wiles to trick powerful men into doing her bidding. She was married more times than Elizabeth Taylor, but eventually settled down to pass her tricks of the trade on to the younger generation by way of her girls' school. Her one weakness is The Spirit, which she reveals by saving him from certain death in the jungles of South America.

Saree (1/12/47): P'Gell's wicked stepdaughter-to-be has it in for her—until she discovers that they are two of a kind. P'Gell quickly sets to work instructing Saree in the proper way to be a

lady—which apparently includes theft and the hoodwinking of unsuspecting young police officers.

Hazel P. Macbeth (10/26/47): This gal is a real "witch," who only shows up around Halloween. Not really bad, just misunderstood.

Sand Saref (1/8/50): She grew up on the mean streets of Central City with Denny Colt, but different temperaments put them on opposite sides of the law. She is perhaps Ellen's greatest rival for the Spirit's heart, but her criminal ways will keep them forever apart.

ONE-NIGHT STANDS:

Elsa (9/1/40): A mad scientist turns this statuesque beauty into a savage beast with his monstrous ape-blood experiments. She kills her own father before dying herself at the hands of another experiment—Orang the intelligent orangutan.

Poppy (9/29/40): When Ellen Dolan returns his engagement ring, hapless Homer Creep falls under the spell of this hypnotic hussy, turning him into a killer.

Orcha Chornya (1/27/46): This Russian Secret Service agent blows into town on the trail of a stolen dagger, bringing a rough sense of Siberian justice with her.

Orange (2/10/46): Ebony's stuck on this cultured cutie, but she only wants him for his investigative abilities.

Skinny Bones (6/9/46): Having none of the culture but all of the avarice of P'Gell, golden-haired Skinny was featured in only three stories. However, she was forever immortalized by Eisner in a gorgeous portrait for the cover of the Quality reprint comics No. 22, an homage to Lauren Bacall that recently became a serigraph.

Gurka Fyfe (6/30/46): This war criminal has atomic bombs all over the globe, until The Spirit "blows" her cover.

Above, Eisner uses panels that suggest the windows of a building.

(Continued on page 50)

"I am no
technique
the part o

MAD-Man Kelly Freas

by Stephen Barrington

From a man who nearly became a plumber, Kelly Freas has gone from commercial artist to the quintessential *MAD Magazine* cover illustrator to delineating the realm of fantasy and science fiction. But for most, he will always be remembered for his renditions of Alfred E. Neuman, *MAD Magazine*'s resident cover mascot.

Freas, who is in his '70s, is not retired. "I'm still working as hard as I can." Freas knew at an early age what profession he wanted to pursue. "I always wanted to be an illustrator. I started off at about the age of four drawing a wiggly line and labeling it 'worm' with the R backwards which my mother kept forever. I always wanted to be an illustrator; I was never interested in being an artist as such. I wanted to illustrate stories. Of course, my first love was science fiction. I was reading everything I could get my hands on by the time I was eight. I read all the science fiction that was published for years and years. But some time around the '50s, I lost track of it; there was just too much being published.

"I am not an artist. I am an illustrator. An illustrator is a professional who has all of the techniques, all of the skills of an artist at his disposal. But the objective is to communicate the part of the story that words cannot put across. This is a real soap box of mine. I could give you a three-quarter hour lecture on what is an illustrator."

I am not an artist. I am an illustrator. An illustrator is a professional who has all of the skills of an artist at his disposal. But the objective is to communicate the part of the story that words cannot put across."

Freas' wife, Laura, reminded him of what he said during a Sci-Fi channel interview. "I may not be the best artist in the world but there's nobody in the world who can illustrate better than I can."

One of Freas' idols was the great Virgil Finlay, a true master of illustration for pulp magazines (see *CBM* #23). "I loved Virgil Finlay's work; he was one of my idols." Also making a major impact on Freas was Edd Cartier (from his work in *Astounding* and *Unknown*). "He did a few covers but his main stock in trade was black and whites. He is one of the finest black and white illustrators we've ever had. His style is so clean and crisp and just, quite frequently, and element of whimsy that makes it wonderful."

By comparison, Finlay was the other side of the coin. "Finlay was so delicate and so careful and so broke," Kelly pointed out. Finlay earned only ten dollars a drawing during his heyday. "And he was taking three or four days on a drawing. Even then, you couldn't live on ten dollars for four days work."

Freas, though, in the 1950s, was about to go *MAD*.

Freas laughed when asked how he first connected up with William Gaines around 1955. "I had done the cover of the little green man (from *Astounding*) "Martians Go Home." "I had that in my pocket; I was delivering another job to Ballantine books. I had been working late and I was sitting on the couch in the waiting room and dozing off when I heard this guy come through. The receptionist said, 'Yes, Mr. Ballantine is expecting you; go right in.' He walked across the foyer, walked past me, slowed, down, backtracked and stood there for a second. I just barely opened my eyes and he was pulling a book out of his pocket and there was my little green man. He said, 'Pardon me. Are you Kelly Freas?' I said 'yeah.' 'You did this cover?' I said, 'I sure did. Guilty as charged.' He said, 'How would you like to work for *MAD Magazine*?' I said, 'I'd be delighted.' 'I'll have the editor call you tomorrow.' So he did and that was the beginning." For the next seven years at least.

And who was that man? *MAD* Associate Editor Jerry De Fuccio.

"He thought the green man looked like Alfred E. Neuman's great-granddaddy. He thought I would be good at doing Alfred E. Neuman which I apparently was."

Freas started out doing interior work for *MAD Magazine* and later graduated to doing covers. His first cover was #40, July 1958. Alfred E. Neuman is left by his lonesome on top of a wedding cake while his apparent bride is making an exit.

"I did a lot of back covers," Freas noted as well as many inside front and back covers almost every issue for five or six years. *MAD* was published eight times a year at the time. "I then slowed down and started doing other things."

One of Freas' classic back covers appeared on issue #67,

ALL MAD ART © WILLIAM M. GAINES

MAD-Man Kelly Freas

December 1961. A Kool-Aid parody featured the slogan: "There's always need for Fool-Aid. Instant Antidote For Adults Fool Enough To Buy Soft Drinks Little Kids Make." Freas chuckled when recalling that particular back cover.

Issue #56, dated July 1960 featured a classic front cover depicting prominent political figures extolling the virtues of Alfred E. Neuman for president (Gaines pushed Alfred for president for many decades). The cover shows the remarkable caricatures of Richard Nixon, John F. Kennedy, Hubert Humphrey, Harry Truman, Nelson Rockefeller, Lyndon Johnson, Dwight Eisenhower and Adlai Stevenson.

This type of cover was no problem for Freas. "I've always been good at that sort of thing. My portraits tend to be toward the caricature but that just makes them more readily identifiable. I can knock portraits out but as fast as I can do anything." Another classic political cover is *MAD* #66, October 1961. "This Issue Will Make J.F.K.—Mad (Mainly because he isn't mentioned once!) with a frustrated Kennedy putting up with Alfred at a press conference.

The back cover of #56 was a whiskey ad satire by Freas, "Rummie Walker." A small photograph of Freas is underlined with: "Artist—Illustrator—Drunk." The surrealistic piece is signed: "Kelly Freash."

"John Putnam was the guy who came up with most of the *MAD* back covers. He was the production man for the whole organization. He was brilliant. His mother was Nina Wilcox Putnam who invented Funny Sunny Bunny and made a million dollars and helped put the first income tax plan into the United States. So you can love her or hate her… depending," Freas recalls.

"Ninety percent of the time *MAD* covers were ideas from readers. What would happen when we had a cover conference, everyone would be there—all the staff, Bill himself and as many of his freelancers as could turn up. Even some of the writers got in on it, although they were persona non grata anyway. They were allowed in just so long as they were polite. We would sit there with a stack of letters from readers and a stack of drawings at least four to six inches high. We would go through these things very carefully and lay aside the ones that looked promising and go through those again until we picked the half dozen we liked best. And then we'd really start to argue. And the one that was picked, Bill Gaines would send a check for $50. That was the kind of guy he was. He was wonderful. Another thing about Bill Gaines, he bought all rights to everything that he

"Finlay was so delicate and so careful and so broke. Finlay earned only $10 And he was taking three or four days on a drawing. Even then, you couldn't

Kelly Freas did the album cover for Queen's gold record *News of the World*.

Kelly Freas' amazingly detailed wrap-around cover for the book *And The Gods Laughed*.

published in *MAD Magazine*. No residuals. No nothing. He gave you a flat fee and that was it."

However, this practice of buying the rights created a problem. According to Freas, after about 20 years or so, his storage area was getting pretty full. Gaines made an arrangement with Russ Cochran to auction off the material. "Bill Gaines took 12 percent of the sale and the rest of the money went to the artist who had done the picture. Can you imagine? No one in the publishing business would ever dream of doing anything like that but Bill."

Freas remembers one incident from 1959 in particular. "Once I was getting tired. I said I'm going to take an extended vacation. I'm going off to Mexico for a couple of years. He says 'Oh, really. You taking your family?' 'Yeah.' My kids were three and four years old at the time. He says 'It sounds like a bad place to be going with little kids.' 'They told me there are plenty of opportunities there. They've got good schooling.' 'I tell you what. Before you make any decision, I want you to go to my doctor at my expense, have a complete physical. Make sure you're all right.'

a drawing during his heyday. live on $10 for four days work."

"So I went to his doctor and I got about a three-inch sheaf of papers. By the time he was through with me, he knew what my grandmother had eaten for breakfast. But Bill paid the bill. The doctor's report was: "Mr. Freas is a typical member of his age and income bracket. He eats too much, drinks too much, doesn't get enough exercise or sleep. Aside from that, he's fine." Bill says, 'O.K., go take your vacation.' Freas was gone for almost four years. "I kept on doing *MAD* covers while I was down there."

MAD's circulation was about one-million an issue during Freas' tenure. "I didn't have anything to complain about; they paid good money for that time period. And when Bill Gaines sold off the original artwork later on I got a check from him for about $15,000 to $20,000."

The covers were done on illustration board mostly done in inks and acrylics.

Even Freas' family wasn't spared from his cover work. The March 1959 Valentine cover featured a female version of Alfred E. Neuman. "I used my daughter as a model for the female Alfred; she was about five years old at the time. We called her Little Grundoon from Walt Kelly's Pogo."

Freas has two children, a boy and a girl and a half dozen or so grandchildren.

Freas says tongue-in-cheek: "I'm 76 going on 140." Freas was

Mad about MAD

by Mark Magarity

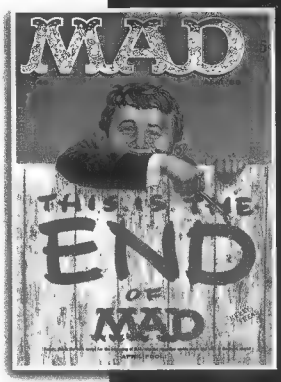
The cover art genius of Kelly Freas

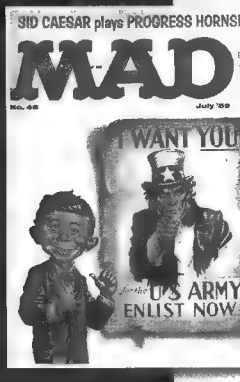
HOO HAA! It is the long, hot summer of 1961, and fifth grade is a distant memory. Roger Maris is steadily working towards the Babe's home run record, and I am at the plate in a sandlot baseball game trying to establish a record of my own. Maybe, just maybe, I'll make it to first base this time. Yeah, right! Later, after the game, my friends and I head for the local malt shop, and while the soda jerk is whipping up a shake on the cool green Hamilton Beach, I walk over to the magazine rack. There among the myriad of titles I search out my favorite, *MAD*, and once again on the cover is that schmuck I have come to love over the years, the incomparable Alfred E. Neuman. HOO HAA!

Yes, that memory stretches back a long way into the recesses of my mind and like so much of the flotsam and jetsam of my life's experiences it is one I remember fondly. Now, as *MAD* fast approaches the millennium its status as a cultural icon is assured, but it isn't just the sophisticated parodies and satire that reduces many dedicated readers to uncontrollable spasms of laughter, but the painted covers of that wide mouth, toothy grin of Alfred E. in those long ago days of the late '50s to the early '60s.

MAD has always had covers illustrated by some of the greats in comic history. Who can forget the work of Will Elder and Harvey Kurtzman on the early comic issues? But although Kurtzman Elder, Wally Wood, Norman Mingo, Jack Davis and others have established their niche in *MAD* history, it will always be, in my opinion, the Alfred covers of Frank Kelly Freas that stand out over the passage of time.

Surprisingly, Kelly Freas' first work for *MAD* wasn't a cover. He did several parodies in issue #s 31, 32 and 34 in the early months of 1957. Then, his first painted work for *MAD* was an ad parody of fountain pens that was on the back cover of issue #38 (May 1958). Issue #40 (July 1958) was the momentous milestone in Alfred E. Neuman's Appearances as Kelly Freas began a streak of *MAD* covers with portrayals of Alfred E. that were as wild as the craziness of the magazine itself and captured an era of *MAD* that continues to be one of the highlights of its





long and illustrious history.

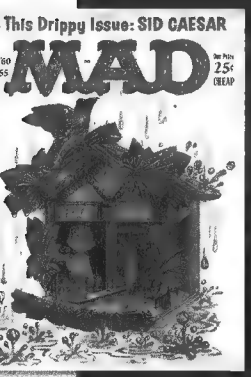
This streak of covers lasted continuously from issue #40 until issue #59 of December, 1960. It picked up again with issue #62 (Apr. 1961) and covered another period of time until issue #67 (Dec. 1961). With the exception of issue #s 68, 71 and 73, Kelly's tenure as *MAD*'s premier cover artist came to an end with issue #74 (Oct. 1962). There were 30 front covers, not to mention an almost equal amount of back covers that parodied commercial products such as alcohol, tobacco, and consumer goods from soap to cars.

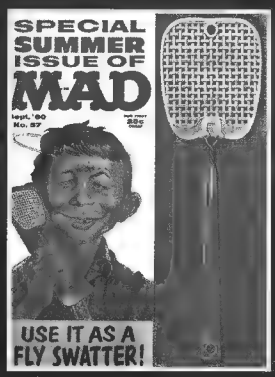
When I pick up an old *MAD*, there is an overwhelming nostalgic rush and an immediate historic connection of having grown up with the movies, books, television shows, and products that *MAD* parodies. There's something about that ornate lettering of the letters in the *MAD* logo with those little wood nymphs running through the design, that "IND" off to the right side of the letter M, and the price of "25¢ CHEAP" that transports me and I'm sure, others to those memories of growing up in a particular time period.

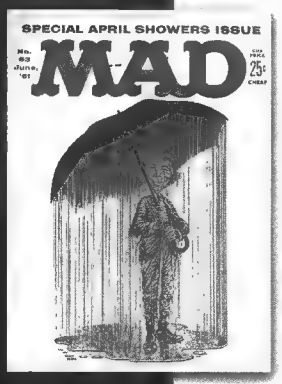
But *MAD* is not *MAD* without Alfred E. Neuman, and the covers of Kelly Freas create the total package. His sense of design, portrayal of Alfred, and sense of humor combine to produce an effect that leaves me chuckling and laughing every time I see one of his *MAD* covers. Kelly once said in his essay, "The Story Between the Words," that in illustrating an artist should "adapt to make the effect you want possible." In the case of his *MAD* covers and his ad parodies, he leaves me and others smiling.

Take, for example, issue #41 (Sept. 1958). A partially painted Alfred is on the cover. Attached to the painting is a small note from Kelly to the *MAD* editor stating that he just got a call from *Time Magazine*. Time wants them to do their covers, and here's what he's done so far as he takes off in mid-production leaving the editor with paint by number directions.

Recently, at the 1998 San Diego Comic Convention, Kelly told me that this cover was by far one of the favorites. He said that ideas for covers were discussed in meetings with the *MAD* staff. Then he would do a painting and make adjustments, but he would often go back to his first idea if the adjustments were not satisfactory. "Stick with your first idea," he said with a smile and ride with it. Most of the time your instincts will be correct. Composition and technique







Kelly Freas

born in Hornell, New York (90 miles south of Buffalo) in 1922.

But after a seven year run with *MAD*, including over 50 covers, Freas was ready to move on.

In Frank Jacobs' 1972 biography of Gaines, Freas is quoted as giving the reason for leaving *MAD* as: "Alfred E. Neuman was making me stale. I found it difficult to shift my artistic gears from the sublime to the ridiculous and back again. It didn't have anything to do with the money."

Freas also added that he found Gaines' notorious paternalism "pleasureful, but you can't live with it for too long because you come to depend on it."

When reminded of the comments, Freas said: "If he quoted me, I must have said it. I don't remember saying it. It's the sort of thing you could get hung up on because I was doing a lot of other stuff at the time. I was working some for Ballantine; I was working for about a half dozen paperback books at the time."

Freas was also a prolific illustrator for *Analog*. "I didn't like the name change (from *Astounding*). I was too conservative to like the change. Imagine—a conservative science-fiction illustrator. Science fiction readers as compared to fantasy readers, science fiction readers do tend to be quite conservative. They like things done realistically, accurately. They will allow you one, possibly two departures from reality in any given job but never more than that. The rest of it has to be good, authentic,

"Bill Gaines took 12% of the sale Can you imagine? No one in the

logical pictorialization.

"Then you go to something like Alfred E. Neuman which is purely insane and it does take a shift in gears."

Norman Mingo took over the cover chores following Freas' departure. Mingo was doing a lot of commercial work prior to taking on the *MAD* covers according to Freas. "He was good. He was extremely versatile. He could do anything in the commercial advertising art line. Anything from a auto advertisement to a pretty girl," Freas recounted.

Doing a *MAD* cover "was not too complex. We'd have the idea that the reader had sent in and I'd refine that into a good image and then we'd kick that around and make whatever changes we felt should be made in it," Freas said about doing the covers during his New York days.

However, while living in Mexico, that was an Alfred of a different color. "That was a little harder. I had time enough. They would send me the idea sketch and I would skip all of the preliminaries and go right from that into a comprehensive which would be exactly the way I intended to paint it."

Shipping the covers from Mexico proved to be a nightmare

Kelly Freas' haunting frontpiece for the Easton Press version of George Orwell's *1984*.

at first since the mail was heavily regulated and expensive. Freas finally came up with a courier-type system through friends who mailed the covers in the U.S. "The first time I tried to mail one of the cover paintings, I sent it to a friend in Mexico City figuring that would save some time. She took it to the post office and discovered that she had to get a stamp on it from them that cost $100. Then she had to take it to another place where they kept her waiting most of the afternoon and that would have taken another $100 if she hadn't got tired of it and left." The cost was so high because the Mexican government was worried about losing some of their own artwork, and, due to customs' regulations.

After that bureaucratic encounter, "I found someone to carry them out of Mexico and mail them in the U.S. Never lost one."

Freas was under contract with Bill Gaines for the *MAD* covers. "I worked on contract and no two contracts were alike. It was not a per cover basis," Freas said.

About doing the covers, Freas said: "I loved it. I had more fun than I ever had doing anything else."

Freas, though wasn't too happy about his first published *MAD* cover, the wedding cake issue. "'My God, that's awful,' I thought. It got better though."

Freas spends some of his time now painting reproductions of past covers. "I've been doing this for a lot of people. One guy in particular wanted me to do what might have been a *MAD* cover in the 1950s. It's a picture of Alfred E. Neuman in a space suit on the moon and done in the style of the '50s. This is tricky since Neuman's style evolves as he goes along. He was delighted with the result, though."

and the rest of the money went to the artist who had done the picture. publishing business would ever dream of doing anything like that but Bill."

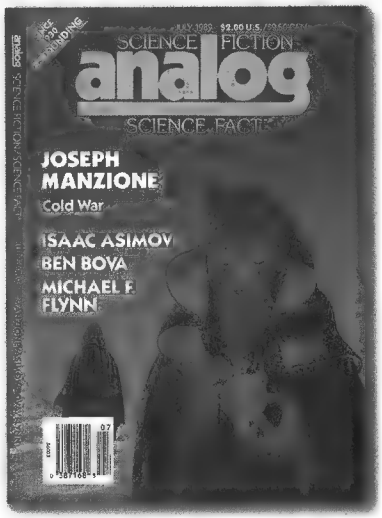
Freas admitted that his favorite *MAD* cover appeared on the December 1958 issue. Alfred in the centerpiece of a delightful and colorful menagerie. "I had a ball doing that cover." (He recently did a reproduction of this cover for a customer.)

"The headless horseman cover (December 1960) was one I did right before I left for Mexico. I was beginning at one point to feel like that headless horseman," he laughed. "Which is why I went to Mexico." His reason for going was for "rest and relaxation."

An original *MAD* cover was 15 inches by 20 inches. "That's the original size of practically everything I do," Freas noted. "Sometimes I do an item real small or as large as 20" x 30"," he conceded.

Freas can recall only one *MAD* cover that was never used but he was paid for it. "Bill Gaines was absolutely great on his business dealings. They wanted something else all of a sudden that was more timely."

Freas received his formal art education at the Art Institute of Pittsburgh (1947-52) but was a commercial artist before World War II. "After I came back from the service, I wanted to go into illustration specifically. So that's what I studied at the institute."



At one point, Freas headed up his own advertising agency and farmed out work to other artists while in school.

It was while he was still in school that Freas saw his first nationally-published cover hit the newsstand, *Weird Tales*, November 1950.

"The cover started out as a project in my art class—an illustration project—too a pulp magazine cover. And since I was a fan of *Weird Tales*, I decided to paint a *Weird Tales* cover." The 15" x 20" piece was near completion when a colleague suggested that Freas send the cover in for consideration. Kelly protested that it wasn't finished but his classmate insisted on sending it in anyway.

are always subject to argument, but nobody can really evaluate a painting unless it is the artist. The artist determines what is successful."

Then there is the incredibly detailed cover of issue #43 (Dec. 1958). Alfred is a scarecrow in a field with comical representations of the animal kingdom all around. With the barbershop group of crows singing (crowing?) on his sleeve, the dinosaurs in the background, the woodpecker on his ear, the koala bear on his leg, or the penguin (perhaps a take off on Cool brand cigarettes) lighting up a cigarette for the woodchuck, everything is so deliciously mad. "One must keep the dominant figure, Alfred, central to the piece. The black colors in the animals at the bottom of the cover were positioned to carry you along the bottom and up the corn stalks toward the central figure," remarked Kelly as he commented on his design of what many think is one amazing cover.

Issue #44 also has one of the most striking parodies of a commercial product that I have ever seen. In a deliberate tribute to Norman Rockrirall, Kelly illustrates a teenage gang member as a spokesperson for Crust gum paste as he proudly states, "Look, Mom—no more cavities!" Obviously there are no more cavities because there are no more teeth as he proudly displays only his gums.

Issue #44 and 45 (Jan./Mar. 1959) introduces us to Alfred's girlfriend. She's just like Alfred only with more hair. Issue #44 also has the distinction of being one of the few wraparound covers in the history of *MAD*. Issue #51 (Dec. 1959) is the third and final appearance of the female Alfred E. Neuman as she wasn't as popular as Alfred, according to Kelly. There could only be one "Alfie" as Kelly affectionately calls him.

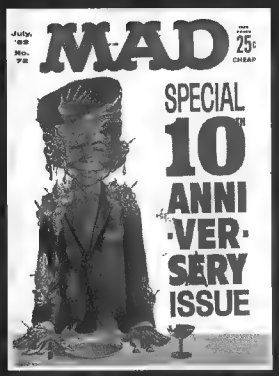
Throughout 1960 and 1961 *MAD* seems to have several "special issues." In issue #53 (Mar. 1960) Kelly portrayed Alfred leaping the Grand Canyon in a Special Leap Year Issue, and in issue #54 (Apr. 1960) Alfred paints This Magazine is Revolting (against Conformity) in a Special April Fool Issue. Halloween is at the forefront in #59, a Special Halloween Issue (Dec. 1960) where only Alfred's head is carried by a pumpkin-headed horseman. In addition, Alfred is a weather vane in issue #62, a Special March Winds Issue by the blowhards at *MAD*.

MAD takes a plunge into politics with issue #56 (July 1960). Alfred is being touted as the next presidential candidate by Kennedy and Nixon among others in a crowded cover of political personalities. Moreover, in issue #66 (Oct. 1961) Kennedy is portrayed once again in an issue that will make him mad, mainly because he isn't mentioned once.

Other ad parodies by Kelly involve a hospital patient who receives his bill and goes into shock in issue #48 (July 1959) and a besotted drunk in issue #63 who is "Sadder But Wiser" as the Dear John letter from his wife reads that she is leaving him (June 1961).

Although it is difficult to choose, one of my favorite covers is issue #70 (Apr. 1962) where a calm and unruffled Alfred E. on ice skates is jumping five barrels on ice head on into a frantic and panic-stricken ice skater approaching from the other side. My hat is off to Kelly for this one and many others. Speaking with him at his table at the San Diego Convention, it was easy to feel, in the presence of this soft spoken man, his obvious love for what has become his life's work—painting. With his wife Laura by his side, Kelly greets his admirers and fans like familiar friends who have just happened to stop by their home for a visit, and they are the most cordial of hosts in making you feel right at home in the middle of a convention where thousands of energetic fans overflow the aisles.

Frank Kelly Freas, continuing a career that has spanned over forty years, has done artistic work in virtually every genre of the world of illustrative art. The ten Hugo awards alone might cause others to rest on their laurels, but not for Kelly Freas. Today he continues to illustrate and to talk at comic conventions around the country, and although the art world awaits each new artistic endeavor, his work on *MAD* does not go unnoticed as he is warmly remembered for creating some of the best *MAD* covers ever to be illustrated. As Kelly and *MAD* approach the new millennium, perhaps there will be new *MAD* covers by Kelly Freas of the Alfred E. Neuman all of us love so well.



The editor used it and the rest is history.

"Of course I was ecstatic; it was my first cover for a national magazine," Freas recalls. However, Freas said he agonized over the cover not being complete. But for the 40th anniversary of the cover being published, *Weird Tales* allowed Freas to submit his finished version which was published.

While Freas finally got to redo the cover. It involved a lot of reworking but four decades of nagging doubt had been erased.

"I usually had two weeks (to do a *MAD* piece), although you couldn't really plan on that. I was doing the front cover, back cover and the inside front cover. You never knew which one was going to take the most time. At that stage of the game, *MAD* was coming out every six weeks so I could figure on two weeks per job—which wasn't enough. I've done them in as little as one week at a crack."

Freas was asked if any one experience with *MAD* publisher Bill Gaines stood out. "All experiences with Bill Gaines were memorable for anybody. To try to pick out any one thing would be downright silly. I loved that guy."

Freas describes his life right after leaving *MAD* as "a little bit of starvation" while trying to reacclimate to doing fantasy and science-fiction work.

"Actually, more than anything else, I think I was sort of creatively drained trying to go back to my own roots which were in science fiction. It wasn't as easy as it sounds because the field had changed quite considerably. And I had a reputation, of course, as a 1950's illustrator. Most of the kids that were art directors at that point had never heard of me or knew of me only as one of those old Joes who did paperbacks in the '50s. Getting back into it was not as easy as it sounds. But it did work. I was fortunate in picking up a number of paperbacks and gradually built a level of recognition in the field," Freas said.

Freas has done well over 100 *Analog* covers as well as hundreds and hundreds of paperback book covers. One thing Freas didn't do was keep track of his artwork. He started photographing his art in the mid-'70s. Before he didn't keep track of who the buyers were when work sold at a convention.

When doing illustrating today, Freas says he'll do "Anything the job requires." Cover ideas come from a three-time reading of the manuscript for the proposed job.

"You name a medium, I can use it effectively. But the one that is most useful for general purposes is acrylics," Freas points out.

If Bill Gaines had asked Freas to do another *MAD* cover, Freas responded emphatically: "Hell, yes."

About his decision to become an illustrator, he spoke of only one reservation. "I think the only regret I have about my career is I decided to be an illustrator instead of a plumber." When asked why, Freas responded with a raised voice: "To make money! Have you ever hired one?" he asked rhetorically.

"I have to tell you one thing that goes clear back to my childhood. I couldn't have been over 12 at the most. We had a family conference because I had been offered a commercial art scholarship. My mother and father and grandmother all maintained that the sensible thing for me to do was to learn a good respectable profession. I might become an electrician like my father had been; I could go into any sort of good, steady trade, like radio repair. I could draw and paint on nights and weekends. But don't try to make a living this way. So we didn't take the scholarship. They had the right idea, really, in the long run (because of the Great Depression of the '30s). Those were the days when just having a job was a major accomplishment."

Freas' third wife, Laura, works at a classical music station as an announcer. "One of the things that brought us together was that she was the host of a night-time syndicated show," Freas recalls. Mrs. Freas has three degrees in music education and currently works for two different stations.

Laura (married 10 years) also works as an illustrator (not an artist). "I basically work for the same clients as he does and have communication with them as his agent and executive director of his studio."

It was the *Weird Tales* editor George Scithers who discovered her after noticing an illustration she had done on her stationery. Spot illustrations by her first appeared in the Freas' 40th anniversary issue of *Weird Tales*. Other works include *Analog* and *Dungeons and Dragons*.

"My first wife gave me an education in women. My second wife (Pauline, now deceased) began the process of domestication and prepared me to be worthy of somebody like Laura. And with Laura, life has been pure joy."

MAD's Marvelous Mascot!

The late MAD Magazine publisher William M. Gaines took particular delight in the likeness of the moronic MAD mascot with the big ears. Alfred E. Neuman has been around for quite a few years but did not get his present name until around 1956. "We gave that face many different names in the beginning," Gaines related. "It was Al Feldstein (then MAD editor) who finally pegged him Alfred E. Neuman and put that name with the face." They have been together ever since.

Gaines credited the late Norman Mingo as the definitive Alfred artist, though.

"We always said he did the definitive version. Alfred has been around for over 100 years, " Gaines said. (Alfred's image dates back to the turn of the century on cards, calendars, etc.). "We kind of adopted him but Mingo did him our way."

Placards showing the likeness of Alfred were in full view at a Goldwater rally at the 1964 Republican Convention. A party of mountain climbers have been said to have posted an Alfred E. Neuman flag at 28,000 feet in the Himalayas.

According to Frank Jacobs, author of The MAD World of William M. Gaines, "The name Alfred E. Neuman had its genesis on the Harry Morgan radio show. Morgan, searching for an innocuous name, landed on Alfred Newman, the conductor and composer. Alfred Newman became a running gag, a character who would make five-second appearances on the program and then vanish. (Harvey) Kurtzman (MAD's first editor) latched onto the name. He liked it because it had the ring of a nonentity. But Kurtzman misspelled the name and also, inadvertently, added the middle 'E.'"

Also, according to Jacobs, "Kurtzman first glimpsed the face in 1954 while visiting Bernard Shir-Cliff, editor of Ballantine Books. Pinned on Shir-Cliff's bulletin board was a postcard picturing a grinning kid and captioned, 'Me Worry?'"

Gaines and MAD Magazine even survived a lawsuit over Alfred's likeness during the first years of his use. The court ruled in their favor after it was established that MAD had adopted the "orphan's" likeness.

***From an article by S. Barrington published Sept. 9, 1980 in the* Mobile Press.**

A number of new variants have surfaced since the first two articles appeared in *CBM* #51 and 55, as well as the answers to questions about other comics alleged to be price variants. But first I would like to clarify, and add to, a couple of items from "The 30¢ Price Puzzle" in *CBM* #55.

➧ The two June 1976 Marvels which exist only as 30¢ editions are *Ka-Zar* #16 and *Inhumans* #5, not #6, which is correct on the list but not in the text.

➧ Somehow I managed to omit listing two of my favorite Bronze Age Marvel Horror reprint titles: *Tomb Of Darkness* and *Weird Wonder Tales*. And there is no significance to the colored price balloons: if the regular edition has color, so does the variant, giving it a peculiar look.

➧ The 30¢ variant edition of *Amazing Spider-Man* #155 has a faint "Still Only 25¢" which is visible behind the 30¢ price, just as it appears on regular editions. And as the result of collectors watchful eyes, 167 of the 185 possible Marvel price variants published between April and August 1976 are now known to exist!

The list of 59 titles (see inset) reveals the few variants as yet unseen. Parentheses ( ) denote issues known to exist.

Although the search for Marvel price variants published between June and October 1977 has been going on a little longer than the search for their 1976 predecessors, they have proven more challenging to find. The list of 184 comics and 52 titles (see inset) may have 35¢ cover variations. As before, parentheses ( ) denote issues known to exist.

23 of 184 possible 1977 Marvel 35¢ variants are now known to exist. Since *CBM* #55, the 30¢ variants have jumped from 24% to 90% confirmed, while the 35¢ variants addressed in *CBM* #51 have crept from just 6% to exactly 12.5%. Many are beginning to understand that the 35¢ variants are much scarcer! Only single copies currently exist of known 35¢ variants, with the single, high-profile exception of *Star Wars* #1. There are now several dozen 30¢ variants with 2 or more copies known to exist, and very likely all 184 of them exist. I believe all 184 of the 35¢ variants will eventually be proven to exist as well, making a grand total of 369 Bronze Age Marvel comics with variant cover prices.

Some of the 30¢ variants which appear to be more common, with at least 10 copies each known to exist, include the *Eternals* #1-2, *Powerman* #30, *Super-Villain Team-Up* #5, and nearly 10 each are known to exist of the popular titles *Amazing Spider-Man* #155-59 and *X-Men* #98-99 (but not 100)... although superhero status alone doesn't necessarily mean a variant is easier to find. For example, a 30¢ variant of *Iron Man* #89 has still not surfaced. It is easier to understand why eight of the 18 30¢ variants still unaccounted for are westerns... they probably didn't sell very well. *Mighty Marvel Western* met its end with issue #46, cover dated September 1976, the first month all Marvels went to 30¢ per copy. Just two months later, *Ringo Kid* bought the farm with issue #30, cover dated November 1976. *Two-Gun Kid* gave up the ghost five months after that with issue #136, cover dated April 1977. The two remaining western titles, *Kid Colt Outlaw* and *Rawhide Kid*, clung to bi-monthly life for another two years, finally joining their western brothers on Boot Hill with *Kid Colt Outlaw* #229 (April 1979), and *Rawhide Kid* #151 (May 1979).

Except for low-demand titles like *Black Goliath, Conan, Howard The Duck,* and a few others, dealers I have spoken with say the variants sell briskly and with no resistance at 4 x *Guide*. I have found the same to be true, sometimes getting more than 4 x *Guide* in grades above VG. There aren't that many variants changing hands because they are still largely unknown, and people can't collect what they don't know about (and you can't sell what you don't have). The only collector hesitation I've seen to variant sales has been condition, because the average variant turns up in VG or so, explaining why high grade variants sell so quickly at multiples of *Guide*. With much effort I have accumulated 76 of the 30¢ variants and 6 of the 35¢ variants for my own collection, and sold about 25 duplicates.

Here are some examples of realized 30¢ variant sale prices: *Amazing Spider-Man* #159 FN $50 (210% of 1998 *Guide*, or 21 x the regular edition!);

Marvel Price Variants.

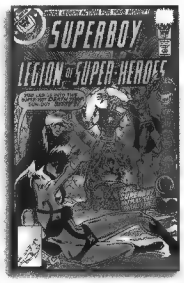
Thanks to Bill Alexander, Chuck Costas, Dan Cusimano, Dean Huntley, Michael Naiman, Phil Schlaefer, and Doug Sulipa for variant information.

30¢ Variants (all 1976)

Adv. On The Planet Of The Apes (5-6) 5-7 (Apr, Jun, Aug)
Amazing Adventures (36-37) 36-37 (May, Jul)
Amazing Spider-Man (155-59) 155-59 (Apr-Aug)
Astonishing Tales (35-36) 35-36 (May, Jul)
Avengers (146-50) 146-50 (Apr-Aug)
Black Goliath (2-4) 2-4 (Apr, Jun, Aug)
Captain America (196-200) 196-200 (Apr-Aug)
Captain Marvel (44-45) 44-45 (May, Jul)
Chamber of Chills (23) 22-23 (May, Jul)
Champions (5-7) 5-7 (Apr, Jun, Aug)
Conan (61-65) 61-65 (Apr-Aug)
Daredevil (132-36) 132-36 (Apr-Aug)
Defenders (34-38) 34-38 (Apr-Aug)
Dr. Strange (13-17) 13-17 (Apr-Aug)
Eternals (1-2) 1-2 (Jul-Aug)
Fantastic Four (169-73) 169-73 (Apr-Aug)
Ghost Rider (17-19) 17-19 (Apr, Jun, Aug)
Howard The Duck (3-4) 3-4 (May, Jul)
Incredible Hulk (198-202) 198-202 (Apr-Aug)
Inhumans (4) (6) 4, 6 (Apr, Aug)
Invaders (6-7) 6-7 (May, Jul)
Iron Fist (4-6) 4-6 (Apr, Jun, Aug)
Iron Man (85-88) 85-89 (Apr-Aug)
Jungle Action (21-22) 21-22 (May, Jul)
Ka-Zar (15, 17) 15, 17 (Apr, Aug)
Kid Colt Outlaw 211-13 (Apr, Jun, Aug)
Kull (16) 16 (Aug)
Marvel Adventures (3-5) 3-5 (Apr, Jun, Aug)
Marvel Chillers (5) 4-6 (Apr, Jun, Aug)
Marvel Double Feature (15-17) 15-17 (Apr, Jun, Aug)
Marvel Feature (4-5) 4-5 (May, Jul)
Marvel Premiere (29-31) 29-31 (Apr, Jun, Aug)
Marvel Presents (4-6) 4-6 (Apr, Jun, Aug)
Marvel's Greatest Comics (63-64) 63-64 (May, Jul)
Marvel Spotlight (27-29) 27-29 (Apr, Jun, Aug)
Marvel Super Heroes (57-58) 57-58 (May, Jul)
Marvel Tales (66-70) 66-70 (Apr-Aug)
Marvel Team-Up (44-48) 44-48 (Apr-Aug)
Marvel Triple Action (29-30) 29-30 (May, Jul)
Marvel Two-In-One (15-17) 15-18 (May-Aug)
Master of Kung Fu (40-42) 39-43 (Apr-Aug)
Mighty Marvel Western (45) 44-45 (Apr, Jun)
Omega (2-3) 2-3 (May, Jul)
Powerman (30-34) 30-34 (Apr-Aug)
Rawhide Kid 133-34 (May, Jul)
Ringo Kid (27) 27-28 (May, Jul)
Sgt. Fury (133-34) 133-34 (May, Jul)
Skull (5-6) 5-6 (May, Jul)
Son Of Satan (3-5) 3-5 (Apr, Jun, Aug)
Strange Tales (185-86) 185-86 (May, Jul)
Super-Villain Team-Up (5-7) 5-7 (Apr, Jun, Aug)
Thor (246-250) 246-250 (Apr-Aug)
Tomb Of Darkness (20-21) 20-21 (May, Jul)
Tomb Of Dracula (43-47) 43-47 (Apr-Aug)
Two-Gun Kid (129-31) 129-31 (Apr, Jun, Aug)
Warlock (12-14) 12-14 (Apr, Jun, Aug)
Weird Wonder Tales (17) 15-17 (Apr, Jun, Aug)
Werewolf By Night (38) 38-39 (May, Jul)
X-Men (98-100) 98-100 (Apr, Jun, Aug)

BY JON MCCLURE

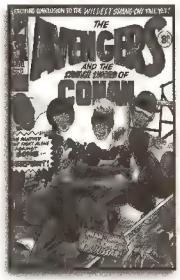
...& beyond!

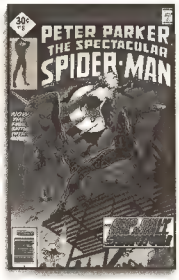


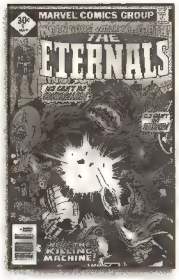
Eternals #1 NM- $30 (133% of 1998 *Guide*, or 5+ x regular edition!); *Fantastic Four* #169 VG- $10 (333% of 1998 *Guide*, or 13 x regular edition!), #170 VG- $10 (333% of 1998 *Guide*, or 13 x regular edition!), #171 VG- $10 (333% of 1998 *Guide*, or 13 x regular edition!); *Iron Man* #85 FN $20 (272% of 1998 *Guide*, or 11 x regular edition!), #88 FN $20 (272% of 1998 *Guide*, or 11 x regular edition!); *Marvel Tales* #70 FN+ $17 (340% of 1998 *Guide*, or 14- x regular edition!); and *X-Men* #99 VF+ $260 (116% of 1998 *Guide*, or 5- x regular edition!)

The 35¢ variants are so scarce that either no one has one to sell or is willing to sell, except for an occasional copy of *Star Wars* #1, which is bringing double 1998 *Overstreet* in all grades, despite the fact that the current *Guide* value is already 14 x that of the regular 30¢ copy!

Three of the top 10 Bronze Age books listed in *Overstreet* are Marvel price variants, with *Star Wars* #1 35¢ cover in first place, and *X-Men* #98-99 30¢ covers in 7th and 8th places. I believe 35¢ cover Marvel variants will bring at least 10 x regular *Guide* when collectors eventually have a shot at them. The 30¢ cover Marvel variants are uncommon, but 35¢ cover Marvel variants are truly rare. Variant collectors fortunate enough to complete their runs can expect to accept less than perfect grades as well.







I would love to see a 25¢ Marvel cover variant of a 20¢ issue. The last five months before the books' price changed from 20¢ to 25¢ are cover dated December 1973 through April 1974, and if Marvel used the same pattern, these are the variants. No Marvel price variants are known to exist outside of the 1976-77 examples, except for the March 1980 *Marvel Super Special* #15, which is supposed to have a $1.50 cover, but is listed as scarce in *Overstreet* with a $2 cover because "the price was changed at [the] tail end of a 200,000 press run."

And what about Marvel 75¢ price variants like *Thor* #338, listed in *Overstreet* and mentioned at the end of my last article? Quite simply, they don't exist! I asked Doug Sulipa to check his stock of *Thor* #338, and he had several dozen 75¢ "variant" copies on hand, which turned out not to be "variants" at all, but Canadian editions!

(DC Comics also has Canadian editions which can be mistaken for price variants. In the mid-1980s, for example, DC comics cost 75¢ in the US, and 95¢ in Canada, and the copies are otherwise identical.)

Dell/Gold Key/Whitman price variants

In my search for more variant comics, I spent some time researching the Dell/Gold Key/Whitman comics from the early 1960s through their final days in the early 1980s. Comic book publishers have historically raised the price of their entire comic line at almost the same time as their competitors. Dell/Gold Key/Whitman was somewhat of an exception to this rule. Here's a quick breakdown of Dell/Gold Key/Whitman's dates of price changes:

DELL:

Cover dated .....Mar 1961 - Jun 1962 .....have a 15¢ cover price
Cover dated .....Jul 1962 - Aug 1968 ....have a 12¢ cover price

GOLD KEY:

Cover dated .....Sep 1968 - Apr 1973 .....have a 15¢ cover price
Cover dated .....May 1973 - Jul 1974 .....have a 20¢ cover price
Cover dated .....Aug 1974 - Aug 1976 ....have a 25¢ cover price
Cover dated .....Sep 1976 - Nov 1977 ....have a 30¢ cover price
Cover dated .....Dec 1977 - Mar 1979 ....have a 35¢ cover price
Cover dated .....Apr 1979 - Jan 1981 .....have a 40¢ cover price

WHITMAN:

Cover dated .....Feb 1981 - Jan 1982 .....have a 50¢ cover price
Cover dated .....Feb 1982 - Cancelled ....have a 60¢ cover price

The 15¢ cover comics Dell published from 3/61 to 6/62 are all relatively uncommon because Dell's circulation took a big drop when potential buyers were confronted with 15¢ per copy in March 1961. With all the competition priced lower, Dell's price increase meant you could only buy four Dell comics for the cost of five comics from another publisher, and that made a big difference to kids.

DC Comics increased their price to 12¢ per copy with comics cover dated December 1961 through May 1969, and to 15¢ per copy from June 1969 through October 1971.

Marvel mirrored DC's move when they increased their price to 12¢ per copy with comics cover dated February 1962 through July 1969, and to 15¢ per copy from August 1969 through October 1971.

Dell restored the 12¢ cover price in July 1962 and sales improved, although they did return to a 15¢ cover price in September 1968, nine months before DC took the plunge, and eleven months before Marvel followed. Surprisingly, Gold Key maintained a 15¢ cover price until April 1973, 18 months after DC and Marvel increased their comics to 20¢ per copy!

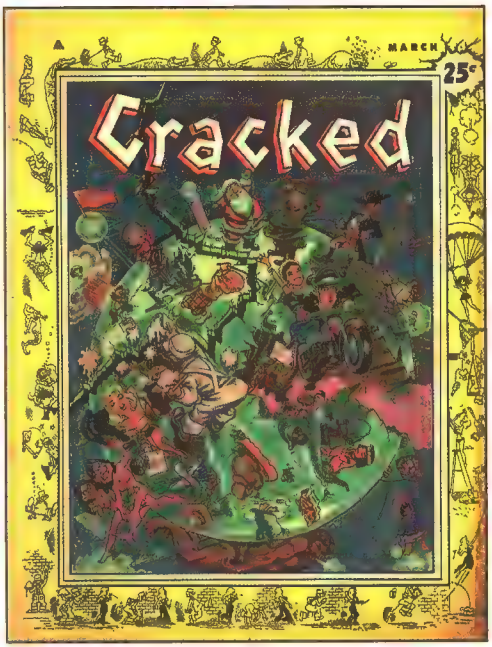
Price variants (when they do exist) are apparently an indication that a publisher is trying to avoid a financial faux pas, like Dell's mistake in March 1961. Although Dell covers began threatening a price hike with the words "still only 12¢," with issues cover dated January through November 1964, they waited four more years to do it!

Gold Key has some variants which have been noted over the years. *Overstreet* lists the "rare" *Star Trek* #2 and 3 variants with photo back covers, published 6/68 and 12/68 respectively. *Magnus Robot Fighter*, another well known Gold Key title, began its run in February 1963. *Overstreet* lists *Magnus* #22 (5/68) and #23 (8/68) and notes that "12¢ and 15¢ editions exist."

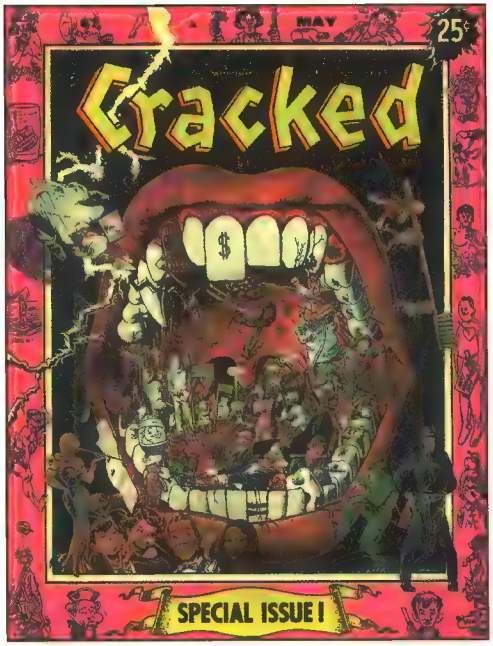
I had intended to focus my initial search for Gold Key variants on all issues published between May and August 1968, because of the examples cited. Unfortunately, except for *Star Trek* #s 2-3, and possibly other photo back cover variants, there are no Gold Key price variants! I asked Doug Sulipa to check his inventory to answer a few questions, with decisive results. Doug had 12 copies of the 15¢ cover "variant" *Magnus* #22 and 15 copies of the *Magnus* #23 15¢ cover "variant," and one regular 12¢ edition. He also had 12 copies of a 15¢ cover "variant" of *Mighty Samson* #14 (5/68), and one regular 12¢ copy. Doug Sulipa lives in Canada. The Gold Key "price variants" that collectors have noted over the years are Canadian editions.

Canadian editions were produced right to the end (final issues had 75¢ covers), and released in bagged groups just like the US editions. After February 1981, Whitman comics' covers have no UPC codes, because they were sold in bags which had UPC codes on them! *(Continued on page 60)*

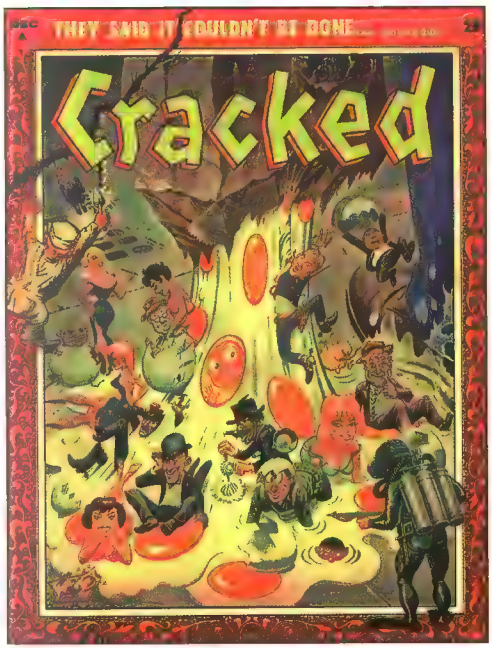
See Letter from the Editor on page 4.



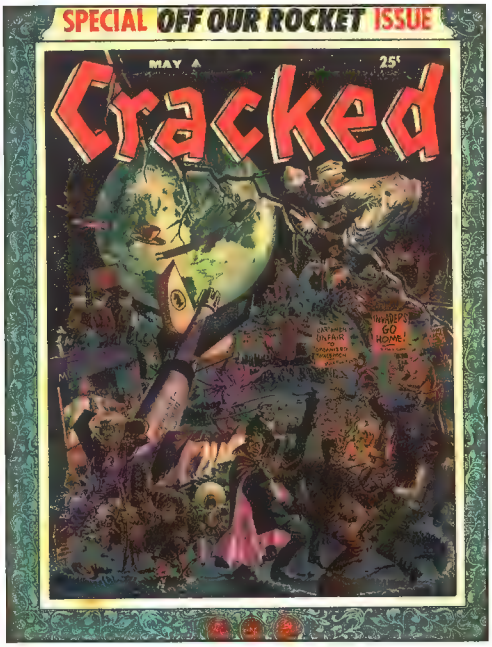
CRACKED #1 (Mar 1958) ▲
Cover art by Bill Everett



CRACKED #2 (May 1958) ▲
Cover art by John Severin



#6 (Dec 1958) ▼
Russ Heath



#9 (May 1959) ▼
John Severin

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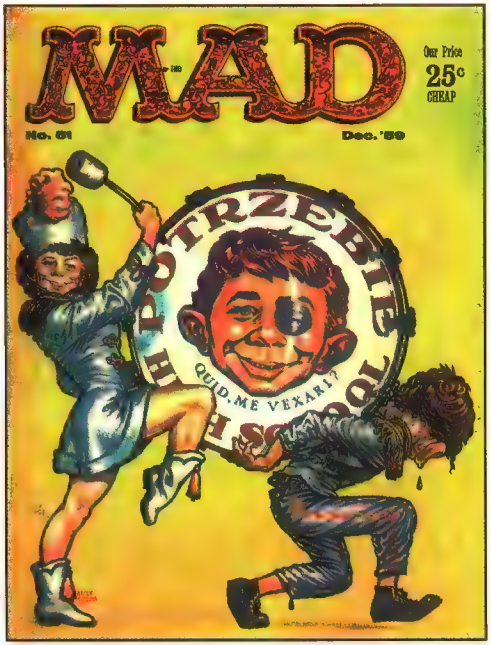
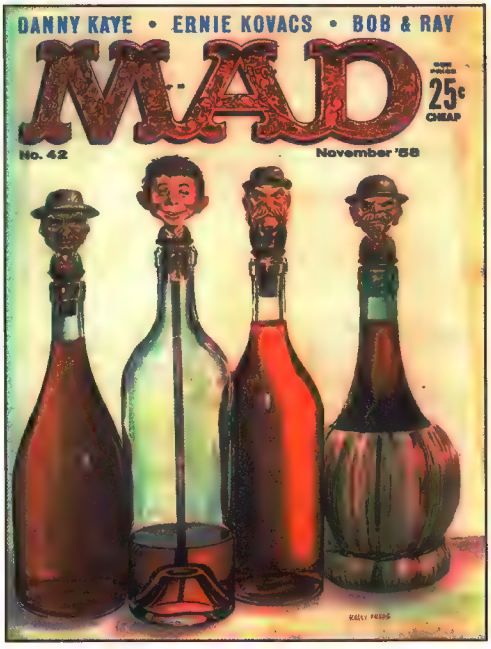
KELLY FREAS CLASSICS



MAD #51 (Dec 1959) ▲

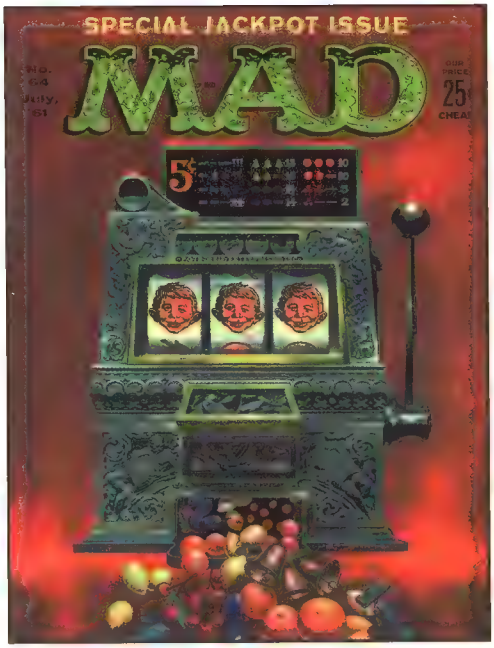
MAD #69 (Mar 1962) ▲

#45 (Mar 1959) ▼



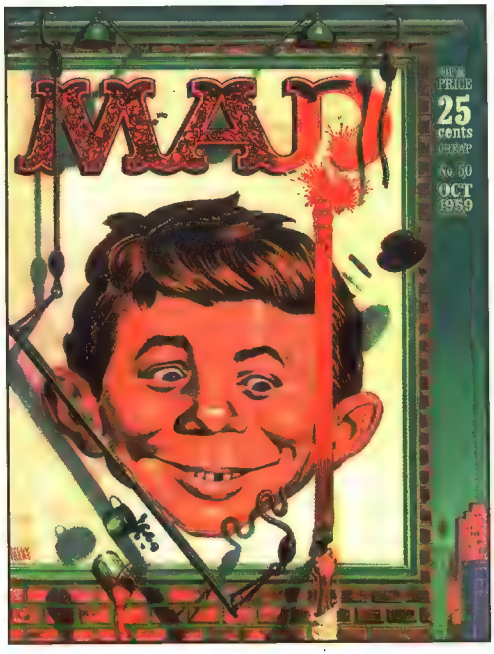
#42 (Nov 1958) ▼

ALL MAD COVERS & BACK COVERS © 1999 WILLIAM M. GAINES

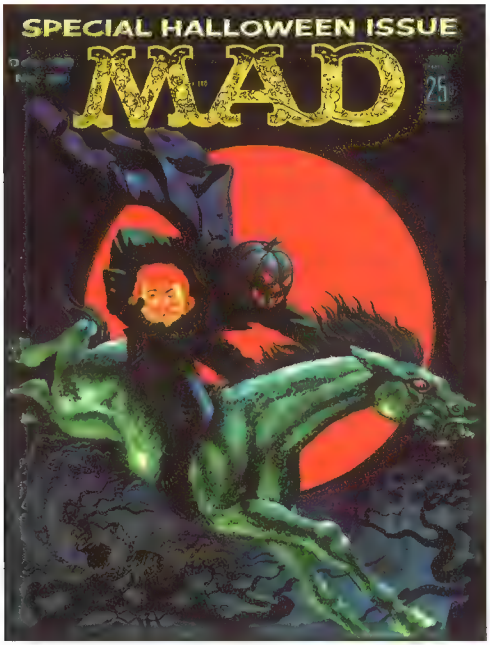


MAD #64 (Jul 1961) ▲ #44 (Jan 1959) ▼

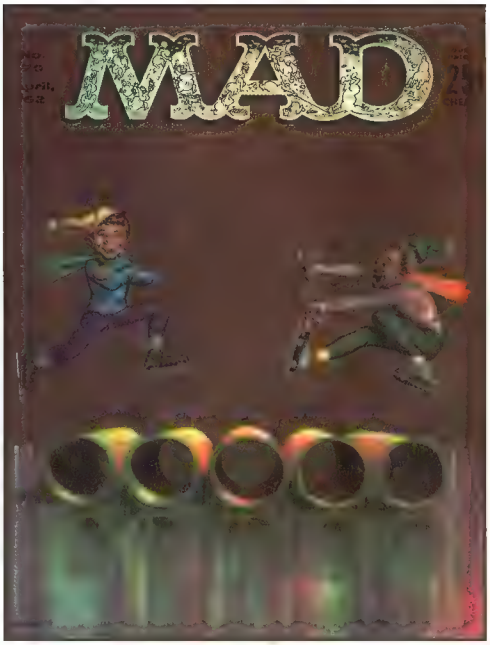
MAD #53 (Mar 1960) ▲ #50 (Oct 1959) ▼



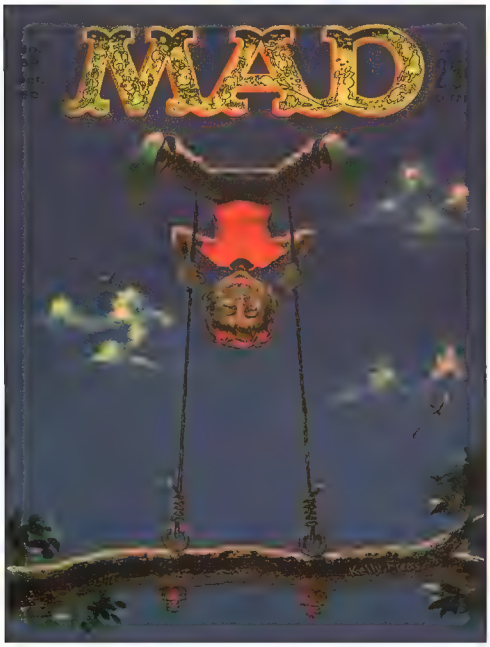
KELLY FREAS

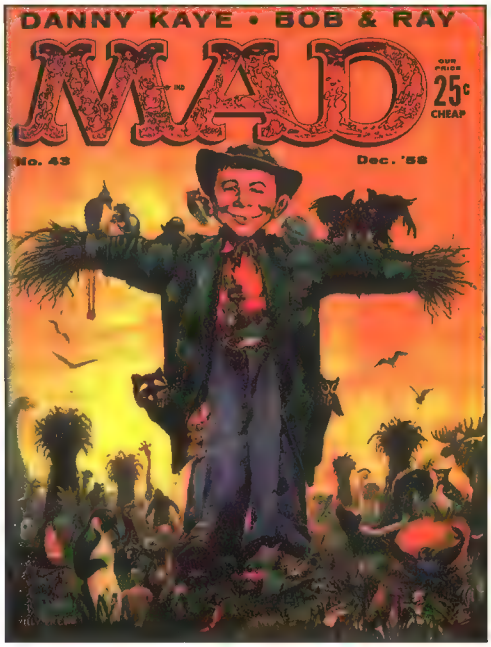


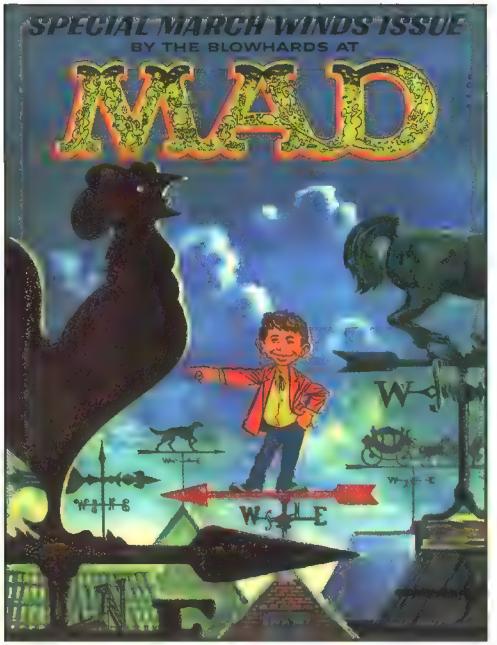
MAD #59 (Dec 1960) ▲ #58 (Oct 1960) ▼

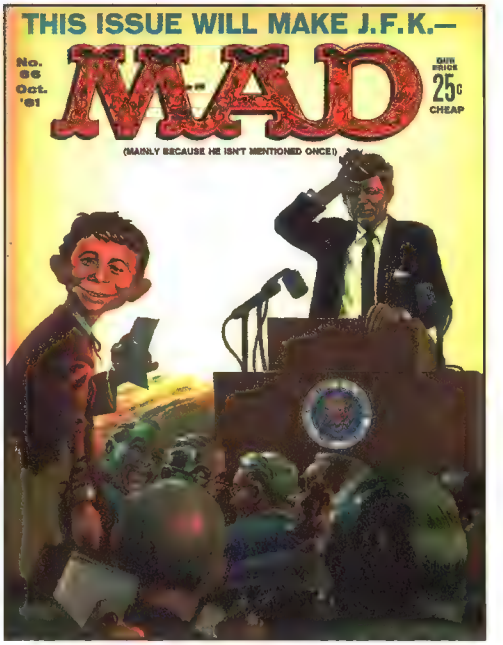


MAD #70 (Apr 1962) ▲ #43 (Dec 1958) ▼



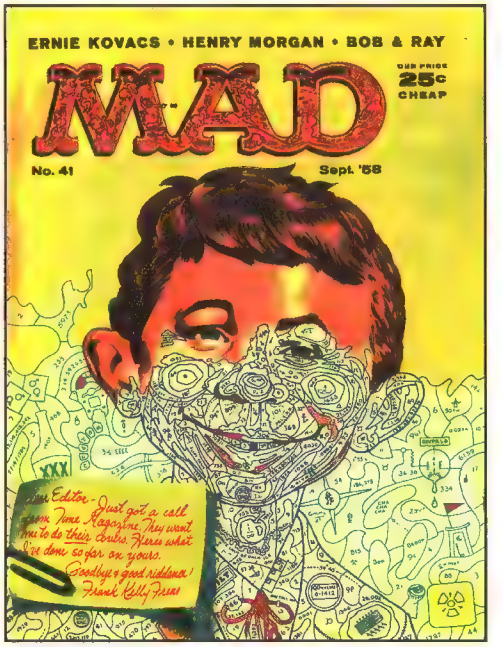




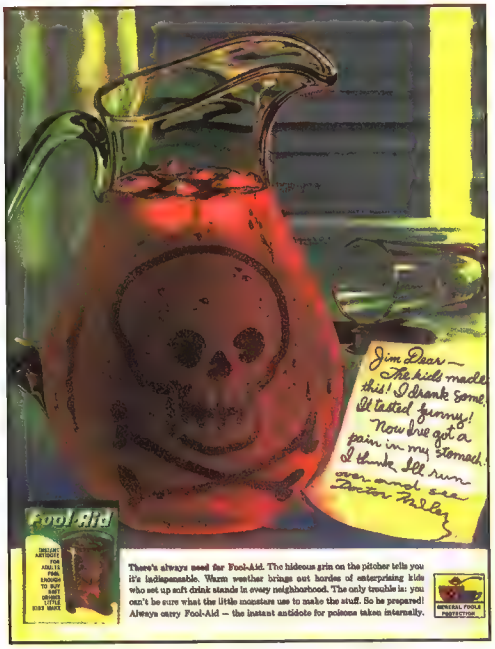


MAD #62 (Apr 1961) ▲ #56 (Jul 1960) ▼

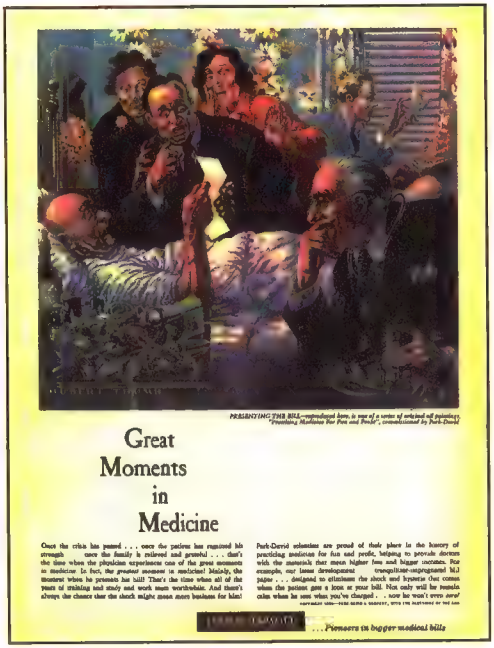
MAD #66 (Oct 1961) ▲ #41 (Sep 1958) ▼


ERNIE KOVACS • HENRY MORGAN • BOB & RAY
MAD
OUR PRICE 25¢ CHEAP
No. 41
Sept. '58
XXX
Dear Editor - Just got a call from Time Magazine. They want you to do their cover. Please what you've done so far on yours.
Goodbye + good riddance!
Frank Kelly Freas

KELLY'S BACK COVER DEPT.


Jim Dear—
He kill made
this! I drank some.
It tasted funny!
Now I've got a
pain in my stomach.
I think I'll run
over and see
Doctor Melby
Fool-Aid
There's always need for Fool-Aid. The hideous grin on the pitcher tells you it's indispensable. Warm weather brings out hordes of enterprising kids who set up soft drink stands in every neighborhood. The only trouble is: you can't be sure what the little monster use to make the stuff. So be prepared! Always carry Fool-Aid — the instant antidote for poisons taken internally.
GENERAL FOODS PROTECTION

MAD #67 (Dec 1961) ▲ #43 (Dec 1958) ▼



MAD #48 (Jul 1959) ▲ #40 (Jul 1958) ▼

Melvin Fuad
Norman Rockwell
"Look, Mom—no more cavities!"
Crust Gumpaste helps gums take the place of teeth by coating them with a hard white enamel finish! Just the thing for punks who get their teeth knocked out from running around with teen-age gangs.
Crust

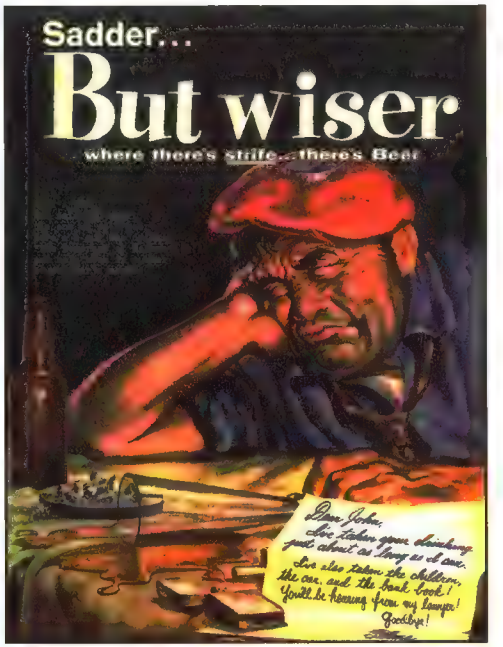
FROM THE RUMMIE WALKER COLLECTION
"Crocked" by FRANK KELLY FREAS
RUMMIE WALKER
Their his first drink in 1840 still going strong
When we commissioned Frank Kelly Freas to paint his hobby for our ad campaign, we hoped he would come up with something as interesting as Harold Von Schmidt and Peter Helck and Robert Riggs had done before him. Unfortunately, it looks like Mr. Freas went a little astray after painting our whiskey bottle. Mainly, he killed the omelettes and ended up skewed to the gills.
Guess the laugh's really on us. We never figured Mr. Freas's hobby would turn out to be "drinking"!
RUMMIE WALKER • BLACK LABEL • SCOTCH WHISKEY

MAD #56 (Jul 1960) ▲ #49 (Sep 1959) ▼

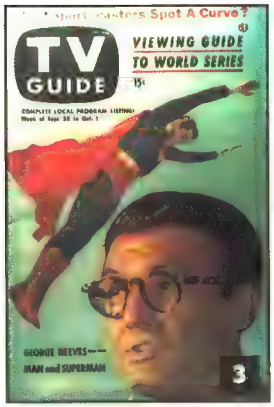
Does she...or doesn't she
ever go out with fellows her own age?
Why only young boys? Only her psychiatrist knows for sure!
MISS CLAIROL® DATE-AGER KIT

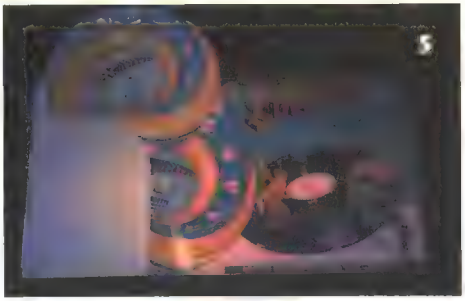
MAD #42 (Nov 1958)▲ #63 (Jun 1961) ▼

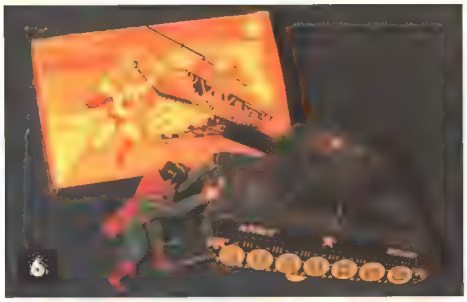
We're taking the pledge at the FOUR POSIES SOCIETY
(And it's about time!)
FOUR POSIES SOCIETY — That, and no other whiskey for us either!



From the Superman Museum







10 Terrific Superman Collectibles

Whenever I meet a Superman collector I always ask them, "What's your favorite Superman item in your collection?" And I ask that question a lot as we get dozens of Superman collectors (along with our many visitors) at the Superman Museum every month. In fact, the yearly Superman Celebration (2nd week of June) brings in collectors from all over the world. And it gets bigger and better each year as the word gets out.

I think that it's very important to point out that the reasons why we collect Superman memorabilia differ widely from collector to collector. And each collector has his or her favorite medium for portraying the Man of Steel.

Many new faces have become Superman memorabilia collectors because of recent history-making events in the "Old Boy In Blue's" 60-year career- like the "Death of Superman" which attracted a whole new generation of fans, or the "Lois and Clark" TV show which got the internet buzzing in chat rooms and web sites full of Teri Hatcher photos.

And though recent, the work of Alex Ross presents Superman in a light that is basic yet brilliant, a Superman that can be respected by the masses. You can see a little of most of the past versions of Superman in Alex's superb art.

I've been collecting Superman memorabilia since 1959, and my love for the character is the reason I collect. I'm willing to accept the changes he goes through every few years: it's turned into my business. The Super Museum in Metropolis, Illinois, "Home of Superman," does well mainly because I display material from all eras and mediums, and collectors say they appreciate the broad selection of items.

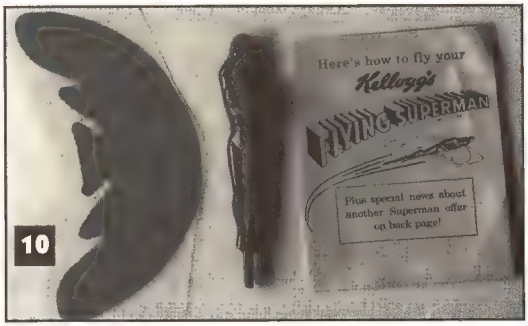
Besides all that, collecting Superman is just plain fun (like so many areas of the hobby). Getting together with other Supe-collectors and talking about the hobby is something I really enjoy. When an item in your collection can remind you of how and when you acquired it and the quest that led up to it and the nostalgia, that's pretty neat. There are so many aspects of the character to collect... the colors, patriotic themes, good versus evil, winning, helping others, adventure, mystery, Christmas, birthdays, holidays, vacations... they all contribute to the excitement (including sharing it). For me Superman collecting, in any form, is all those things and more.

There you have it. Obsessive? I admit it. My name is Jim Hambrick, and I am a Superman-aholic! As Exibit A, allow me to share my favorite Superman collectibles with you. The finalists are not rank-ordered. Happy hunting, and see you next June at the Superman celebration in Metropolis, Ill.

Based on the SUPERMAN adventure feature appearing in SUPERMAN and ACTION COMICS magazines and in daily and Sunday newspapers coast to coast. Adopted from the SUPERMAN radio program.
SUPERMAN
KIRK ALYN · LYLE TALBOT
NOEL NEILL · TOMMY BOND
A COLUMBIA SERIAL
CHAPTER 7
AT THE MERCY OF ATOM MAN!

1) Original Kirk Alyn Superman poster from the 1948 serial (shown in color) and the one-sheet from the 1950 serial (shown at left); **2)** The "jointed wood doll" (Ideal, 1939) was the first Superman toy; **3)** The much-coveted George Reeves TV Guide cover from 1953; **4)** The famous and highly collectible Krypto Ray Gun and Cinematic Pistol (film strip projector) made by the Daisy BB Gun Co. in 1939-1940; **5)** "The Flying Train" two-record set of picture discs (1947); **6)** Superman Tank (1958, Japan, battery-operated)–Supe pushes the tank backwards, lifts it, then pulls it level and forward till action repeats; **7)** Prop from the 1953 Superman TV episode "Man in the Lead Mask" (made of fiberglass and used by George Reeves); **8)** George Reeve's life mask (1953), a casting made directly from the actor's face; **9)** Gold and blue "Turn-Over Tank" (1940, Louis Marx); green version is from 1960s (Japan), after windup, Supe lifts tank then flips it over. Note that the Japanese version puts Superman in a yellow costume; and **10)** Kellogg's Flying Superman cereal premium (1950s).

BY JIM HAMBRICK



CBM Forum

OVERPRICED OR OVERGRADED?

Marketplace opinion by Craig Rader

I am writing in response to the recently released *Guide* #2, *Overstreet's Comic Book Price Update*. In this new publication, there is much notable information to consider and comment upon, with regard to both the Market Reports section as well as grade/price structures for Silver and Bronze Age comic books.

First, let me say that is was nice to see the *Guide* make its second landmark appearance with issue #2, so as to provide collectors and dealers with baseline pricing information in the long interim period between publication of the annual *Overstreet Guides* each spring. Let's not take that for granted, folks. We are fortunate as a hobby to have a timely and reliable publication of the standard *Price Guide*, as compared to the situation with some of the other hobby and collectible fields. For example, I recently became a "crossover collector," of record albums from the '60s and early '70s, and I learned that vinyl collectors had to wait about two years for the publication of the most recent edition of the standard (*Goldmine*) price guide. In the *Goldmine* series, the new guide just came out recently in November of this year (1998) whereas the last, previous edition of that standard guide dates back to 1996. Think about that. If we Four Color fan-addicts had to wait two years for our new guide to come out, most of us would be dead from withdrawal symptoms before the new price info could even get to us! So whether you happen to agree or disagree with pricing trends in *Overstreet*, we are fortunate to have something reliable to react against, as a baseline measure for comic values. I'll try to remember that too, down below, in my comments of disagreement with some aspects of the most recent grade/price structures in *Guide* #2.

Kudos and much credit also, where credit's due, to editor Benn Ray and his staff, and the many *Overstreet* advisors who submitted sales data and valuable market report information. Most of the advisors are busy folks attempting to make their livelihood in the comics/collectibles business, and the fact that they are taking time out of their work schedules to contribute to *Overstreet* shows a real commitment to our hobby on their part as well as a true appreciation of the comic books themselves.

In a previous *CBM* Forum several months ago (issue #61), I discussed the reasons why I felt that medium grade Silver Age Marvels were no longer really good investments over time, particularly in regard to how the mid-grade of Fine (FN) had been significantly devalued as a category, due to landmark changes inaugurated by the (*Update*) *Guide* #1 (November 1997) then subsequently reinforced by the annual *Overstreet* #28 this past April, 1998. Now, based upon my review and consideration of price changes in both our newly-released *Guide* #2 as well as its two predecessors listed above, I feel the need to make an even bolder assertion which, unfortunately, fills me with (not a little bit) trepidation for the state of our hobby as an investment vehicle for collectors. Based upon *Overstreet* price values for the past 12-18 months, I don't feel that many of the Silver Age Marvel titles in high grade condition (VF to NM) are not really good investments for the private collector. Not necessarily bad, but just not good investments. I believe there is considerable evidence for this assertion in regard to a variety (but not all) of the Silver Age Marvel titles. Let's address the various aspects of it.

Many titles from this time period have not only failed to experience any kind of an increase in NM grade in *Overstreet* over the past 12-18 months but have also been devalued significantly in the *Guide* publications to the point where it will take several years for them to recover their former modest values. I am strongly against this trend, for both philosophical as well as economic reasons. However, here are some sobering facts and figures to consider, and I'll put the one example that hurts the most, first of all: my beloved *Daredevil* title. Perhaps no other Silver Age title, among the various run-of-the-mill mid-'60's Marvels, has been mistreated as much as *Daredevil* in terms of *Guide* price structures over (not just the past 12-18 month period I spoke of but also) the last 8 to 9 years as well! I think that *Daredevil* is truly an undervalued title, with its engaging storylines and multi-faceted artwork (which over time has included notable greats such as Gene Colan, Johnny Romita, Sr., Bill Everett, Wally Wood, and Joe Orlando). These and others were showcased between 1964-1967. Many private collectors and dealers I talk with seem to like this title. Yet, such nostalgic sentiments are not enough to engender any kind of notable and stable increase in value in *Overstreet*.

What small, incremental gains which have been allotted to *Daredevil* in *Overstreet* have been knocked back down over time. And I'm talking about key issues here (#2-10) as well as many later issues in the run, up to #49. Here's a recent example of such devaluation in the new *Guide Update* just out. *DD* #11-15 in NM went from $75 down to $65. That's a pretty sizable, (13%) drop, for each of these relatively inexpensive books!

Example #2: I and all of my comic contacts have never been able to get an accurately-graded NM or even VF+ copy of *DD* #7 (Sub-Mariner battle issue). Yet sadly, there it sits in the *Guide* at $250 in NM for nearly two straight years now. *DD* #7 dates back to 1996, at which time it went up $15 from the previous level of $235 in *Overstreet*'s 26th edition. When was the last time you saw an accurately graded NM white-page copy of #7? Apparently, there's plenty of 'em available because the book hasn't moved up in two years in the *Guide*.

Here's a brief list *(Continued on page 62)*

PROMISE YOU'LL BE PATIENT?
I'LL NEVER LET YOU GET AWAY FROM ME!
MEANWHILE
LOOK, KAY-- DR MORGAN IS DOWNSTAIRS! I TOLD HIM YOU WERE ASLEEP, BUT HE INSISTS ON EXAMINING YOU!
I DON'T WANT HIM TO SEE ME!
I'M NOT A VERY PRETTY SIGHT RIGHT NOW! HE'LL TAKE ONE LOOK AT ME AND KNOW WHAT HAPPENED!
I TOLD HIM YOU FELL DOWN THE STAIRS!

A TRIBUTE TO ANDRE LEBLANC

BY ED RHOADES

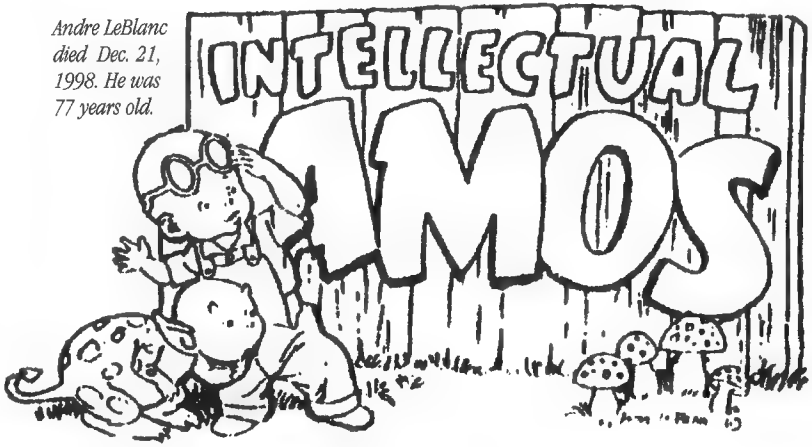
Andre LeBlanc died Dec. 21, 1998. He was 77 years old.

LIKE MOST OF THE COMIC BOOK AND strip artists from the '40s and '50s, Andre LeBlanc has a huge body of work that is largely uncredited, but not unappreciated by fans. If you look very closely at some of the splash pages of the early King *Mandrake* comics, you may see his signature unobtrusively printed at the top. His work can be seen in comics like *Boris Karloff's Tales of Mystery*, Dell movie adaptation comics, *Superman, Batman, Sheena, Captain Marvel, Bulletman, Doc Savage,* and most recently in the Pioneer reprints of the *Phantom* (in graphic novel format) and reprints of Will Eisner's *Spirit* (where his contribution was originally made anonymously).

He attributes his development to the time he spent with Eisner when he was 20, "I joined the Eisner-Iger shop doing backgrounds and learning like crazy from the real pros... Will Eisner, Reed Crandall, Lou Fine...." Much later, he did receive credit as a colorist for one Eisner hardback comic about contacting space aliens but millions have seen the style without knowing the artist.

Comics Review, a current compendium of comic strips which is very much like the old *Ace Comics*, has published Flash Gordon strip stories where he was given a byline by Dan Barry. LeBlanc added "Yes, that was good of Dan. It was the second or third time around. We got together on it several times... different periods. The first time he called me was 1957 when he was planning to return to Europe," he recalled. "And sometime around '58, he offered (it to) me. At that time Flash Gordon was at the top of the heap."

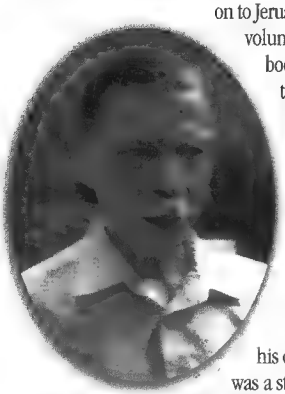
However, Andre's biggest fame in the comic book world comes from his mammoth task of creating a comic book of the entire *Bible* in which he



ANDRE LEBLANC

literally did thousands of full color illustrations for the David C. Cook publication *The Picture Bible*. For this, he did extensive research for source material.

Leblanc: "I made two trips to the holy lands. I went once by myself and once with the family. We took a cruise and the cruise stopped at all these places in the holy land, and I took that as an opportunity. I left the family in Tel Aviv and I went on to Jerusalem, to Jericho specifically." When asked about the volume of the work, he replied, "What appears in the book was not all I did. Things were compressed later on to fit the format... a lot of good stuff... poetic stuff... was not seen in its original form. For instance, I went to a lot of trouble to illustrate the Songs Of Solomon. They eventually published a 900-page *Bible* but I colored 1,200 or 1,300 pages, but they had to compress it." With more than 40 printings in the US, and literally millions of sales, it is likely the biggest and best selling comic book-style publication ever.



Andre LeBlanc shortly before his death.

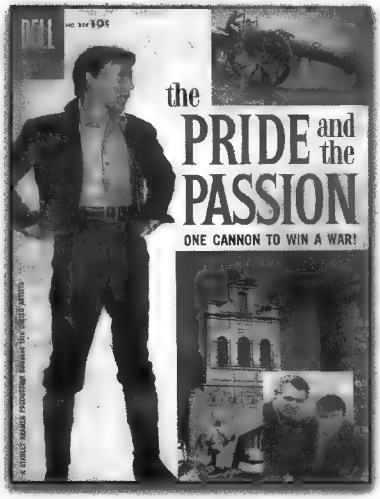
Dell, Gold Key, and King published numerous issues containing LeBlanc art.

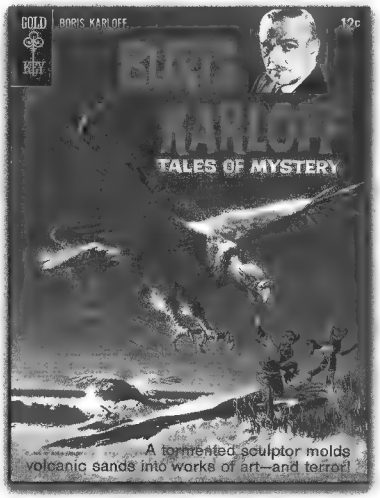
Leblanc's first syndicated work, *Morena Flor*, was his own strip... drawn while he lived in Brazil. *Morena* was a story about a beautiful young heroine fighting deforestation in the 1940s. To say he was conceptually ahead of his time would be an understatement as deforestation has emerged as one of the country's most pressing challenges. His next strip was the now famous and highly collectible *Intellectual Amos*, the comical adventures of a youthful genius who was actually a mirror of Andre himself. Intellectual Amos is like a modern day Leonardo daVinci. Like the renaissance Intellectual Amos, Andre speaks no less than six languages fluently, is an accomplished musician, a respected historian (who once worked as a professional writer for *O'Globo*, a South American newspaper) and is the master of many artistic mediums beyond the brush and pen... the stock and trade of the comic illustrator.

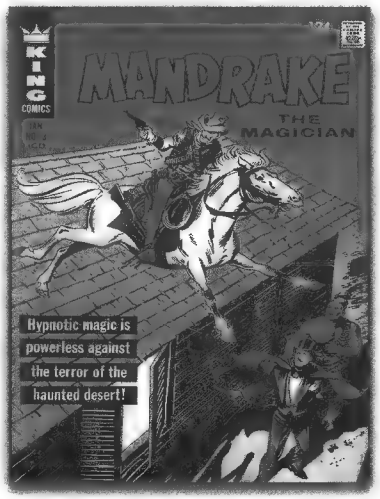
Andre has done covers for numerous publications books, magazines, comics, newspapers, collectors cards and posters and is expert in the mediums of oil, watercolor, pastel, charcoal, and acrylics. Not commonly known to comic collectors, Andre also worked as an animator for Hanna-Barbera after they first began to bring comic book characters to the television screen and then decided to animate stories from the *Bible*. Many syndicated strips bear his mark, including *Rex Morgan MD, Apartment 3G* and *The Phantom*. After teaching at the Museum of Modern Art in Rio, he later served a stint as an instructor at the School of Visual Arts in NYC, formerly known as the School Of Cartoonists and Illustrators (whose initial faculty included Byrne Hogarth and Dan Barry). It's no secret to *CBM* readers that this institution's list of teachers is an incredible who's who of professional illustrators.

Many of Andre's students have voiced their appreciation over the years, pointing to his expertise in everything from detailed inking techniques to his anatomical accuracy depicting animals. "All my life I've loved animals and watching them and trying to understand them. I have a special feeling for horses. When I was very young, I taught myself to ride. I got a book about techniques about how to handle a horse. I love horses and I love drawing horses."

When asked about his dedication to accurately drawn animals in the *Phantom* strip, he replied, "That was naturally a hope... to always satisfy the purists who were reading the strip... so they couldn't find fault with it. African cows are very different from American cows. Our cows are all Swiss and Italian... European cows. In Africa, these cows have extremely large horns, sometimes two or three feet long straight out. Some of the guys who work in comics don't allow themselves the time to go out and do research. They throw in these things as though a cow's a cow. They had never seen any other cow except the kind we have with the great big udder. We only







know milk cows; we don't know the generic cattle that has existed in faraway places. In Vietnam, if you want to show cattle, you have to show buffalo. In Africa, there are distinctive types. The European milk cow does not flourish in these climates. They are too delicate... they need too much food, antibiotics, too much of everything. They are a construct of western civilization."

When Andre was asked about his observations on the idealizing of comic book heroes and heroines, he explained "the women should be beautiful... she's got to have symmetrical features... a dainty mouth, a bit of a nose and large eyes. Now you can vary the proportions of all this, but they have to be basically along those lines to make the woman look appealing, to make her look like a heroine. Hollywood does that all the time. We're all influenced by Hollywood and our expectations are pure Hollywood... what the handsome hero should be, do and say and the pretty heroine too. The words "pretty" and "heroine" go almost inseparable and "handsome" and "hero." The ugly hero, the plain Jane? They (Hollywood) don't do that. Comic books and comic strips reduce everything to its elemental archetypes. The woman is represented as beauty and the man as strength and grace and justice. And you can't have an archetype with a mediocre face. One must draw these characters with a strong jaw and a handsome face.... I strive for that. Now I do it unconsciously."

Recently, Andre was given the highest honor possible from the president of his native Brazil for his illustrations on a series of Brazilian literature classics. He commented on the paths his art had taken him. "What an adventure... what a ride! It was fun all the way. In fact, my friend, Rick Estrada recently spoke to me about letting go of the memories of people who were unkind. I tried to think of enemies to forgive but I have met nothing but kindness... I could find not an enemy in my life, people who have given you gratuitous information and changed the course of my life... I could not think of people who hurt me or diverted me. I look back and this is like something out of a novel... I have no one to forgive. I've never had anyone poison the well for me. And I can't recall ever having the need to hurt someone. The people with whom I've interacted with have been so positive. I'm grateful for the friendship and kindness of all the people I've met along the way."

NOW WILBUR! YOU SHOULD BE ASHAMED! YOU KNOW IT'S WRONG TO MARK UP THE BILLBOARDS! DO YOU FANCY YOURSELF AN ARTIST?
TAP TAP TAP
HMMM! AN ARTISTIC URGE! HMMM! THE CREATIVE URGE IN THE YOUNG ONES MUST NEVER BE FORCIBLY REPRESSED!
THIS REQUIRES THOUGHT!
HMMM!
COMPLEX!
IF WILBUR IS PUNISHED FOR THESE AM-ARTISTIC EXPRESSIONS, HIS YOUNG MIND MAY SUFFER A SHOCK! ...
THE PROBLEM IS REALLY ONE OF GRAVE PSYCHOLOGICAL SIGNIFICANCE AND CHARGED WITH SERIOUS POTENTIALITIES!

Intellectual Amos was one of Andre LeBlanc's most endearing and memorable creations, Intellectual appeared as a backup feature in *Spirit* sections.

Thanks to Harold Miller for Intellectual Amos *materials.*

Yet Another Great is Gone

George Wilson

August 2, 1921 – December 7, 1998

George was a quiet, modest man with a massive talent. George Wilson never sought fame... so he never became a public figure. His wonderful work, loved by so many, was often unsigned and uncredited. George worked in oils and was a master of the medium. If you had a favorite painted comic book cover done before the 1980s, there is a good chance it was his talented work that caught your eye at the newsstand. Many of the great covers of *Classics Illustrated*, Gold Key *Phantom*, *Space Family Robinson*, *Boris Karloff's Tales of Mystery*, *Turok*, and many others were just samples of this phenomenal yet unassuming talent with a brush. George Wilson also illustrated books such as the Avon paperbacks of Flash Gordon, The Phantom, and numerous romance novels. His name almost unknown to the comic collector world, the work of George Wilson will always be fondly and nostalgically remembered...

—Ed Rhoades

Continued from page 25

Dulcet Tone (7/7/46): An argument with Skinny Bones lands this red-headed racketeer in the drink, but she escapes Davy Jones' Locker in time to pin the rap on her partner and rival.

Cox Robin (8/4/46): All we ever see of this lovely is her manicured hand—in a photo taken at the scene of her death. But she helps the Spirit solve the crime nonetheless.

..I GUESS WE HAVE THE LITTLE LADY TO THANK FOR GETTING US HERE IN TIME!
OH, COMMISSIONER! NOT LI'L OL' ME! IT WAS THE SPIRIT HERE WHO DID IT ALL!

Olga Bustle (9/1/46): Known as "The Girl With Those Big, Big, Eyes," this starlet gets stranded on a desert island with The Spirit as a publicity stunt.

Rosie Lee (10/13/46): Ebony arranges to have his own heart transplanted into the breast of this heartless miss, in the hopes that her affections will turn.

Powder Pouf (1/4/48): This black widow makes a career out of framing others, but eventually gets caught in her own web.

Wild Rice (4/4/48): Foreshadowing Patty Hearst, this society girl turns to crime to ease her boredom, but comes to a bad end.

Lorelei Rox (9/19/48): This wild-haired siren lures unsuspecting truckers into her husband's hijacking hands.

Plaster of Paris (11/7/48): The Spirit dances with death when he meets up with this French terpsichore.

Thorne Strand (1/23/49): Cut from a similar mold as the Black Queen, hard-bitten Thorne kills her mogul husband in order to take over his empire. Inevitably attracting the attention of the Spirit, she throws in with a band of sea fairing hussies for a Shanghai caper.

Captain Long Jane Silver (1/30/49): She helps Thorne Strand kidnap The Spirit on her slow boat to China.

HA HA HA ...HELLO P'GELL.. SORRY ABOUT YOUR FINANCIAL SITUATION ...DESPITE YOUR CONNIVING YOU'RE WORSE OFF THAN BEFORE... NO HOUSE!
GOTTA HAND IT TO YOU, THOUGH.. YOU'RE TAKIN IT LIKE A GOOD SPORT.

Miss Cosmek (2/13/49): This Martian secret agent turns bank robber in a bid to stay on Earth.

Wisp O'Smoke (4/3/49): This winsome leprechaun double-crosses Mr. Carrion to recover a pot of gold.

OH, IT'S EASY, ESPECIALLY ONCE I'VE MARRIED MR. QUINSE! HE OWNS THE HOUSE, TREASURE, AND A BIG LOAN COMPANY... GOOD BYE DEARS.. WANTED YOU TO BE THE FIRST TO KNOW...

OH, WHAT A SITUATION! MR. RAYMOND SEEMS TO BE ON EVERYONE'S KILL-PARADE!
MURDER STALKS OUR HOUSE!
OF COURSE, I COULD ALWAYS KILL MR. RAYMOND!
SAREE, MY POOR CHILD, YOU MAY AS WELL KNOW THAT YOUR STEP-MOTHER IS AN EVIL WOMAN! MARK MY WORDS, SHE'LL MURDER HIM! YOU MUST FOLLOW MY INSTRUCTIONS!
HM, IS THAT SO? ANYTHING ELSE YOU CAN SCRAPE UP ON RAYMOND'S FINANCIAL AFFAIRS FOR ME? HMM.. WELL, THAT'LL DO, THANKS!
?
OH, OFFICER, I THINK MY HUSBAND HAS BEEN MURDERED!

Lilly Lotus (7/10/49): When the Spirit takes some time off in seedy San Cedros, he comes across this wretched chanteuse. She tries to help him, but is too late to save her from fate.

Autumn Mews (10/2/49): She uses the Spirit's gullible assistant Sammy to learn the secret of the Spirit's identity. Autumn then tries a blackmail scheme, but gets caught in the cross-fire.

Flaxen Weaver (12/4/49): This gold smuggler on skis interrupts The Spirit's winter holiday, then later turns up at

Again using the "transparent building" technique, Eisner gives the reader the feeling that they are eavesdropping on the Spirit's private conversation.

(Cont. on page 54)

"Aunt" Mathilda Dolan

Autumn Mews

Black Queen

Captain Long Jane Silver

Elsa

Fancesca

Flaxen Weaver

Gertrude Plastik

Loo, the Morning Lotus

Lorelei Rox

Miss Cosmek

Nylon Rose

Plaster of Paris

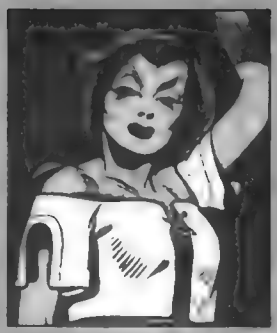
Poppy

Powder Pouf

Thorne Strand

Castanet

Cox Robin



Dulcet Tone

Ellen Dolan

Gurka Fyfe

Hazel P. Macbeth

Ice Waters

Lilly Lotus

Olga Bustle

Orange

Orcha Chornya

Peppi Tamale

Veta Barra

Widder Walker

Wild Rice

Wisp O'Smoke

Continued from page 51

a society party to fill his dance card. After her scheme to rid the guests of their valuables goes sour she turns Cinderella on him and gets away.

Rolla Ball (2/12/50): The derby skating powerhouse is prepared to take a dive for her gambling boyfriend, until the affections of a meek cameraman set her straight.

Loo, the Morning Lotus (6/10/51): While in pursuit of P'Gell, the Spirit becomes the unwilling guest of the lovely Loo—a formidable Chinese warlord. The Spirit gets caught in the middle of her bloody war until an equally deadly rebel woman puts an arrow through her.

Veta Barra (7/29/51): This former silent movie star forces the smitten Commissioner Dolan to resign rather than turn her in for the murder of her husband.

Francesca (9/2/51): She dances the "dance of the bull fighter," but yearns for the real thing. Her hunger for danger leads her to kill, but taking the bull by the horns gets the better of her in the end.

Ice Waters (9/25/49): This gangster's moll follows her goodfella back to the old country—and gets a reception as chilly as her name.

Gertrude Plastik (6/1/52): The Spirit's assistant Sammy falls for this bohemian Jill of all trades, but she has her sights set on the Spirit—the sights of her pancake batter fabricated gun, that is.

THE 7th HUSBAND
GIRLS, WOULD YOU LIKE TO GO ON A CRUISE, THROUGH FAR-AWAY EXOTIC CLIMES-----WITH-OUT IT COSTING YOU A CENT? IT CAN BE ARRANGED!----MARRY A SHIPPING MAGNATE!----LIKE THE TIME I TOOK MY SEVENTH HUSBAND, ELLIS MURDOCH...
I DO!
HERE SHE IS,! NAMED AFTER YOU---THE S.S. P'GELL! SHE'S YOUR BABY, SWEETHEART!
S.S.P'GELL
THE SPIRIT
THE SPIRIT
BY WILL EISNER

FACING PAGE: Described by critics and fans alike as humorous and outrageous, this example of the Spirit strip pulls out all the stops when it turns the tables on classic comic book gender roles. It includes bondage, domination, and the suggestive use of the word "jewels" as a double entendre.

LATER...
SPIRIT!! ARE YOU OKAY ?
ARE YOU KIDDING?! UNTIE ME P'GELL OR...
NO! LISTEN TO ME I WANT YOU...THIS SOPHOMORIC CRIME FIGHTER BIT IS NONSENSE....YOU ARE WASTING YOURSELF..!!
YOU REALLY WANT POWER!! RUNNING AROUND IN A MASK IS JUST A WAY OF HIDING A FEELING OF INSECURITY... YOU SEEK IMMORTALITY AND MISS THE TRUE PLEASURES OF POWER.!!
WELL, HERE'S POWER! HERE'S TWO MILLION DOLLARS WORTH OF JEWELS. THE CAPISTRANO JEWELS LOOK, I GIVE THEM TO YOU!!
TAKE ME!! TAKE ME!! TAKE ME!! TAKE ME!! TAKE ME
HOW'D YOU GET THESE JEWELS P'GELL??
NEVER MIND... IS IT A DEAL ??
...NO DEAL??
NO DEAL! AND WHAT'S MORE WHEN I GET LOOSE I'M GOING TO DRAG YOU AND DOKTOR DEKKER, -YOUR NEW PARTNER IN CRIME - TO THE SLAMMER...THIS TIME P'GELL YOU'VE HAD IT!!
LATER...
P'GELL DARLING... NOW THAT YOU'RE BACK WITH ME I'VE GOT SOME LOVELY PLANS FOR US!

Then there's the weird coincidence of the character's alternate name, Night-wing. That name is mentioned in the 1975 deposition—almost a decade before Dick Grayson first donned the batlike mantle of Nightwing. It seems an unbelievable coincidence. Except that before Dick Grayson became Nightwing, Martin Cruz Smith penned a bestselling horror novel called *Nightwing*. The 1977 book, recounting a plague of vampire bats in Arizona, claimed that "nightwings" were the English translation of a Native American word for bats. I've been unable to independently confirm this, but if it's true, then Frank Foster might have taken the name from Indian legend. Supporting this theory is the odd black pattern covering Batman's loins. It may be a breechcloth or loincloth! In fact, the costume might just be an Indian outfit with a modified Satan's cowl of the kind popular in costume shops back then. Bat gods or folk heroes were common in Navajo and Mayan myths.

I understand from former DC colorist Anthony Tollin that the modern Nightwing was inspired by Superman's Batmanlike alternate identity in Kandor, of Nightwing and Flamebird fame, who first appeared in *Superman* #158, (January, 1963) in the story, "Superman in Kandor." Where did that inspiration come from? No one remembers.

Other aspects of Foster's story also ring true. His association with Al Capp, for example. Foster recalls coming to New York circa 1931 after going to art school with Capp. Capp dropped out of art school, and went to New York, where he started a daily panel for Associated Press, *Mr. Gilfeather*, in 1932. Before long he was assisting Ham Fischer in *Joe Palooka*, then jumped ship to create *Li'l Abner*.

The Munsey comic book covers Foster remembers working on were the one piece of the puzzle that made no sense to me. Until I made the connection to *Prize Comics*. When I first saw Foster's Batman, I thought of the Black Owl. Their cowls echo one another. *Prize Comics* also featured the Green Lama, who first debuted in Munsey's *Double Detective* pulp early in 1940. What was a Munsey pulp hero doing in *Prize Comics* only months after his creation? Was Munsey connected with Prize? Both were based on Broadway, although at different addresses. Both cross-advertised each other's magazines, implying a connection.

Joe Simon, who worked on the Black Owl in 1940, tells me that he knows of no connection between Munsey and Prize. The cross ads may have been generated by Prize's ad-swapping department. Prize ads also appeared in early DC comics, a fact that may be explained by the fact that DC distributed *Prize Comics*.

Still, the Green Lama's dual appearances make one wonder. And the timing seems to fit with Ruth Foster's recollection that: "I feel sure it was 1939 that Julian Marson gave Frank the name of Munsey Publications to submit his drawings of 'Batman' and another set of drawings for 'The Raven.' The reason I feel positive of this time is that Frank got employment at the Mellon Art Gallery then under construction in Washington, D.C. (now the National Galley of Art). He went to Washington in the early Spring of 1940."

Prize Comics #1 was cover-dated March, 1940. The Black Owl does not appear until the second issue as a business-suited crimefighter wearing an owlish cowl which resembles the stylized Foster Batman headpiece. Later that year, Joe Simon and Jack Kirby recreated the Black Owl as a regulation superhero.

If the Munsey that Foster remembers was somehow connected to *Prize Comics*, this would date that experience to late 1939—post-Batman. Why wouldn't the Prize editors have told Foster. "Look, there's already a Batman"? Perhaps when they discovered the other Batman in his portfolio, they decided the artist was a rank amateur, if not a plagiarist, and quietly dismissed him because they couldn't trust his other characters to be original too. And just as quietly appropriated his cowl design for their own creation.

This chronology also fits Frank Foster's recollection of discovering *Batman* comics in Washington in 1940. Not being a comics reader, he would have walked past *Detective*

Batman & Raven

Continued from page 19

to New York City where he had some periodical work in his brother's painting and decorating business. The following three years from September 1937 to October 1940 were financially grim years. (The Depression at its worst—particularly for an unknown freelance artist). From October 1938 to October 1940 we lived in Christopher Street in Greenwich Village."

It was during this period that Frank Foster Sr. tried to sell his services—and Batman and the Raven—in earnest. Through a friend named Julian Marson, who worked as art director for the Abraham-Straus department store in Brooklyn, Foster was given a referral to the Frank A. Munsey Company, one of the largest pulp magazine publishers of the time. From his deposition:

"He said why don't you take all your art work up—including these drawings and everything else—go see them, and see so-and- so. I couldn't possibly remember who I saw. Well, I submitted the drawings, among others, particularly these two, which were the Batman one and the one of the Raven. The people at Munsey said to leave the drawings. As I said, there were several of them, but I threw the others away years ago. They said, in the meantime would you care to work here for a week or so while we have time to get together and discuss the thing and see if there's a possibility of the future of a story. So I worked there on a drawing board on comic book covers. Now you're going to ask me what covers I worked on. This is going to be very difficult. It would be—I don't know—typical comic book covers.

"They were other people's drawings," Foster elaborated, "and I was transferring the drawings so that they could be reproduced in color."

Munsey, who published *Argosy, Detective Fiction Weekly* and *Double Detective*, among other pulps, did not publish comic books that anyone knows about. Their pulps used painted covers exclusively, but the work Foster recalls certainly suggests comic book covers.

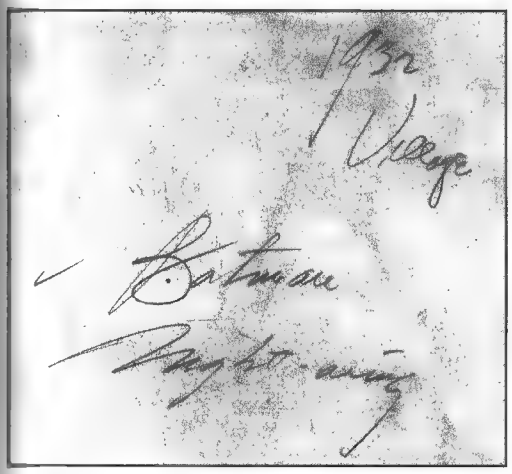
At the insistence of his lawyers, Foster contacted his friends from his New York days who might recall seeing the Batman art and corroborate his claim. Most were unfindable, or professed no memory of the art, but one who did was P. Bryon MacDonald. Foster wrote him the following on July 20, 1975: Dear "By":

Enclosed are photo prints of cartoon subjects "Batman" and "The Raven", originals of which I have had, along with others, since we all lived in New York, on Christopher Street in Greenwich Village during 1937 and 1938.

It is very important that you, Brad and Pete can remember seeing my "Batman" drawings at that time, and if so, write me to that effect.

Competent attorneys in Boston are gathering all the information possible from me relative to the fact that I actually originated the character "Batman" prior to its publication by others. (I am sending "The Raven" along to jog your memory. If you recall, I named the hero and heroine after Peter and Nancy— his girl at that time.)

During 1937 and 1938, I was trying to peddle my ideas around New York. At that time Julian Marson gave me a lead to see somebody at Munsey Publications in New York City. I submitted my portfolio to them, which included these two cartoon strip ideas. They kept "Batman" and others for study and gave me approximately a week's work with their studio while they discussed



Closeup of the words "Batman" & "Nightwing" in Foster's own handwriting.

the drawings for possible publication. At the end of the week they returned all the drawings and said they could not use them and I went my way. Very shortly thereafter I got a mural job, again through Julian Marson, at the World's Fair in Long Island, and the cartoon drawings were put aside. Some months later, "BATMAN" came out as a continued story, the character being almost identical to mine and using the name "Batman". We all discussed it at length several times, but since I was working at the World's Fair, all was pushed aside in favor of food and rent.

Byron MacDonald replied on August 4: Dear Frank & Ruth:

The arrival of that package did rather surprise us and couldn't figure what you could be sending us, but after opening we understand.

I definitely do remember those drawings as we had lots of discussions concerning Batman and Frank's short time working there.

Brad, Pete & I were living in Brooklyn at the original interview, I think, but moved moved to 128 Christoper shortly thereafter. We had many discussions pro & con concerning this, in New York, Washington and on the Vineyard & trips to & from.

According to the affidavit, Frank Foster didn't precisely remember when and where he first heard of Bob Kane's Batman.

"I think the first time it came out in a conversation would probably be in the late '30s or '40s, when we started to say, "Well, jeez, look at that—look at that!"

Foster's wife Ruth had a clearer recollection. One day her husband came home all aghast with a *Batman* comic book.

"He brought it home and said, 'Can you believe this!' she recalls.

From her 1975 deposition:

"I clearly remember Frank taking his drawings of 'Batman' and 'The Raven' to a publisher or agency, but I truthfully don't remember the name of such firm. However, I do remember that they gave him a few days work executing some drawings (which was more than welcome to us at the time), and that they kept his drawings while he was there. When he left Munsey, they told him they couldn't use 'Batman' or 'The Raven' drawings and so they were filed away in 'dead storage' so to speak. Imagine our surprise when a few months later we noticed a 'BATMAN' comic strip published."

Despite their astonishment, the Fosters never pursued the matter legally. Ruth Foster explains:

"We discussed the possibility of doing something about it, but with literally no money or 'know-how' and not knowing any legal authority,

Comics without noticing a vaguely familiar creature of the night all through 1939. But the *Batman* logo would have shouted out to him from any newsstand. *Batman* #1 debuted with a spring 1940 cover date.

And what of the Raven? The surviving partial page is clearly a three-tiered comic *book* page. It's not a comic strip. The character seems to be a combination of The Shadow and perhaps Doc Savage. There is no date on the board, but the automobile suggests the early-to-mid-'30s. Although Foster recalls creating the Raven earlier, he also mentions other artwork since lost. Since the surviving Raven page seems to be a middle story page, it may be that Foster retooled a comic strip version of the character for comic books once that market opened up post-1935. That fact that two characters were named after New York friends also tends to date the art to 1937 or later. In any case, the Raven material appears inconclusive as far as helping date the Batman art.

It's probably worth mentioning that *Sure-Fire Comics* featured a similar character, also called the Raven, in 1941. But masked mysterymen were very common on those days.

How might this prototypal Batman fit into what we know about the genesis of Bob Kane's Batman? Years ago, I asked Kane to walk me through the Dark Knight's creation. This is what he said:

"I took the figure of Superman and started putting tracings over it. First, I called him Bird-Man. He had bird wings. And then, I remembered the Bat, and the DaVinci sketch. I knew a bat should be dark and I had a black mask on him. But I think I might have had a red union suit instead of a gray one. The initial colors were not the colors that finally emerged. I got it down pretty much the way you see it on the *Detective Comics* #27 cover."

Writer and co-creator Bill Finger remembered this for the *Steranko History of Comics*:

"I went over to Kane's, and he had drawn a character who looked very

much like Superman with kind of... reddish tights, I believe, with boots... no gloves, no gauntlets... with a small domino mask, swinging on a rope. He had two stiff wings sticking out, looking like bat wings. And under it was a big sign...Bat-Man."

Finger went on to say:

"I got Webster's Dictionary down off the shelf and was hoping they would have a drawing of a bat, and sure enough they did. I said, 'Notice the ears, why don't we duplicate the ears?' I suggested he draw what looked like a cowl. He experimented with various cowls. I suggested he bring the cowl nosepiece down and make him mysterious and not show any eyes at all. I didn't like the wings, so I suggested he make a cape and scallop the edges so it would flow out behind him when he ran and would look like bat wings."

There wouldn't seem room in these two anecdotes for a Frank Foster influence. But consider this possibility: Suppose Kane had brought his embryonic creation, Bird-Man, into the DC offices and an editor rejected it as too similar to Superman. Suppose this editor had been one of the many to see and reject Foster's pre-Superman Batman? Suppose, consciously or maybe unconsciously, the name resurfaced in his mind. Suppose he told Kane, "Change Bird-Man to Bat-Man." Unwittingly, Kane turns what is essentially an accidental prototype for Hawkman into Bat-Man by changing the name and the wings, brings in Finger, and the rest follows naturally without anyone involved needing to see the Frank Foster sketches.

Of course, this scenario is purely hypothetical. An accidental parallelism à la Batman and the Black Bat could also explain the riddle of the Batman of 1932.

A final unsolved mystery: the strange female face on the reverse of the Batman board. At first glance, it might seem the notation "1932 Village" refers to this drawing, as if she were some unusual woman Foster sketched from life in the village (Greenwich Village). Frank Foster's deposition is silent on her significance. But Frank Jr. recalls this: "My father told me that was Batman's girlfriend." Pressed for more details, he admits not being sure his father meant girlfriend in the literal sense.

"I know it was related to Batman," he says. "She was an exotic character in his life."

As far as the son knows, there are no scripts or notes or other art to shed any more light on the Batman of 1932. So we will never know to whom the rock-jawed face beneath the cowl really was, or how he came to be.

In the final analysis, I have to accept the story of Frank Foster and his unknown hero of the night at face value. Whether this strange masked superhero represents a prefiguring of the future, a synchronistic case of two minds finding the same groove, or something more significant, we'll probably never know for certain.

But I must admit I'm impressed and intrigued by the originality of Frank Foster's Batman design. Bob Kane's Batman is admittedly the Superman uniform with a different color scheme and some gothic batfrills. The other Batman lacks most of the cliches of the early superheroes—chest emblem, trunks, gloves—even boots. This suggests to me it doesn't belong to the mainstream of the superhero concept, but may predate it, just like Lee Falk's Phantom. In fact, it may be so original in design it only *looks* like a superhero design to modern eyes, to whom superheroes are a part of the cultural fabric. Personally, I prefer the Foster Batman design. All it needs to make it perfect is a batwing cloak.

Frank Foster, Jr. sees it differently. Tapping the cover of Bob Kane's *Batman and Me*, he says, "This Batman here I definitely like better than my father's, and the cape is a definite plus."

And it must be said that it takes more than a costume to make a superhero. Kane's moody art and Finger's brilliantly inventive ideas made Batman what he was—a legend.

All this makes me wonder if Batman *had* to be. Maybe if Kane and Finger hadn't created him, someone else would have. I can't help but wonder: what if it had been Frank Foster's Batman who first saw print in 1939? Maybe today we would be reading the exploits of Batman... and *Raven*?

—Will Murray

it seemed to be an impossible project. It was during this period that he was offered work in Washington and with the prospect of finally earning a small regular income, the whole matter of comics was forgotten. We have referred to these incidents many times during the past 35 years between ourselves and to some of our relatives and friends, but no physical action was ever taken."

One of the problems was that Frank Foster remembered showing his portfolio all over New York, but except for the Munsey experience, couldn't specifically recall which companies he visited. His son, who researched the period, points out that in 1937, his parents lived on East 52nd Street in Manhattan—only five or six blocks away from the DC Comics offices on Lexington Avenue, between East 46th and East 47th Streets.

"In my opinion," he says, "if he went to New York to sell his art, he wouldn't have missed them. He was right next door to them. I think the chance that he overlooked them is nil. Considering that's what he went for and there were so few places to go anyway."

In 1937-38, there were only a handful of comics publishers, principally Dell and Funnies, Inc. DC Comics was the largest.

Having failed to launch an art career, the Fosters moved to Washington, DC in September, 1940 where Frank worked for the Mellon Art Galley—now the National Gallery of Art—maintaining and restoring art. Later, Foster worked as an architectural designer and renderer all over the country, primarily working on hotels. The puzzling matter of the DC Batman doppelganger he didn't know faded from his day-to-day concerns.

"It bothered him," Frank Foster, Jr. explains, "but it never preyed on him. He was a very kind, gentle kind of person. Never used a swear word. Wouldn't step on an ant. He wasn't a religious person, but he was quite spiritual in his own way. He was not a go-getter type. He wasn't a hustler. He didn't know how to market himself. In all of his life—and he did a lot of creative things that people loved—he was never able to cash in on anything. He was always one of those people who got taken advantage of. He was just too much of a pushover."

Besides, Frank Foster, Sr., had moved on to a new character, one he hoped to market as a series of children's books.

"He used to tell me bedtime stories of King Aquazoo," Frank Jr. recalls. "King Aquazoo was a character he invented—he probably got the idea

from the legend of Atlantis—that lived on an island that sunk, and he learned the secret of how to breathe underwater. And taught the rest of his little kingdom, and they started a new undersea life. And the adventures of all the creatures of the sea were what the books were about."

Several mockup volumes entitled *King Aquazoo* and his *Undersea People* survive. Despite superficial conceptual parallels to both Sub-Mariner and Aquaman, they depict a bearded character resembling King Neptune. Although he attempted to market the property well into retirement, Frank Foster's King Aquazoo remained an unrealized dream.

Despite a great deal of work, which included having the Batman artboard and ink authenticated by an expert, ultimately the law firm of Shapiro & Isreal dropped the matter of the Batman that never saw the light of day—or dark of night.

"They had nowhere to go with it," Frank Jr. admits. "What do you do with it? It was too old."

But the younger Foster wouldn't completely give up. The death of his father three years ago rekindled his determination.

"It was me that kept the interest on it," he explains. "I would occasionally look through the portfolio of old drawings and I'd see Batman. And I'd say, 'Gee, this is unbelievable.' You grow up with it, and you don't think of the significance of it. It's just something that's always been there. My parents had given up on it so long ago, they think I'm crazy to even pursue it at all. My mother says, 'Oh, no! Not Batman again.'

"I would keep thinking of it every time some new Batman thing came out. Then the movie. And another movie. And another movie. I was just cleaning my office space and I said to myself, 'Am I just going to put these away and forget about them forever or—' What can you do? So I thought I would get media interest in the story and see what happens."

Shortly after his father passed away, Frank Jr. engaged another law firm to pursue the matter further. A 1996 meeting with DC Comics legal counsel was cordial, but unproductive. DC was intrigued, but unhelpful.

"He said he believes they are authentic," Foster says. "There's no problem with that as far as DC is concerned. As far as liability is concerned, he said, 'Unless you can prove a direct link positive between Kane and these drawings, there's no liability.' And even if there was, it would be a tough liability to prove because it's so old."

While admitting it's unprovable, he has his own theory as to the connection between his father's Batman and the cultural icon the world knows today.

"I believe that my father showed it to Kane, or people at DC, or another party that ultimately resulted in the production of *Batman* comic books. I feel the visual resemblence is too strong. I think it's unlikely that the person who drew Batman did not the see the drawings, or replicas. But I feel there was a visual connection. That's my best guess."

And the fact that an unknown artist like his father might have been the first to coin not only the name Batman, but that of Nightwing as well, does not strike Foster as either extremely unlikely or wildly coincidental.

"I think it was just another name for a night character," he offers. "I think he just dreamed it up. My father dreamed up a lot of things. He had a great imagination. He could sit down and make very inventive stories. If you read King Aquazoo, you'll see the invention of the Great Red Sponge. This was a wise creature of the ocean. He had a very fertile mind. I'm sure he just invented it. He said that when he made Batman, it was *before* Superman."

In Frank Foster's mind, there is no question of accidental parallelism.

"In my mind there's been a tremendous injustice and I don't feel right about just letting it lie forever and never trying to make it right," he insists. "My father's passed away, so unfortunately if anything develops, he won't be here to enjoy it. There is an injustice to be made right, and history should be corrected, and even if it's posthumous, he should be given some recognition. I feel he did create the Batman. It's the first Batman. It was there, at the same place, at the same time, Batman was published. I mean, very near by. In my mind, there *has* to be a connection. I would like to get proof positive of it. And I'm hoping that this media coverage will eventually flush out all the details and make it definite."

The absence of a demonstrable connection between his father and the early DC Comics does not dissuade Frank Foster, Jr.

"I think the possibility of two men in 5,000 years of history arriving at a character who's a hero of the night, with the name of Batman, of being in the same place, at the same time, on the earth, is *zero*," he says flatly.

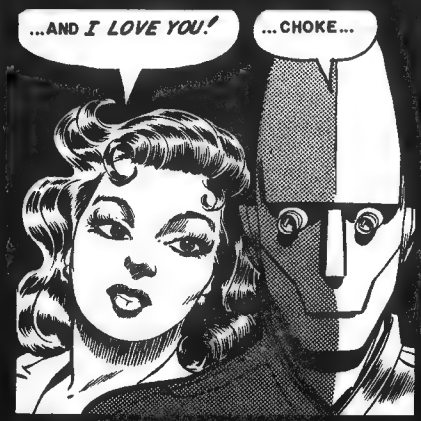
IN MEMORIAM

Joe Orlando

EC AND DC LEGEND

Joe Orlando died December 23, 1998 in New York. He was 71.

Joe was born in Bari, Italy, April 4, 1927, arriving in New York at the age of two. Orlando attended the famous New York High School of Industrial Art, and went on to a five-decade career as a comic book writer, artist, and editor. Orlando made many contributions to the field of illustration, but is most recognized by collectors and fans for his artwork in EC comics during the 1950s, and later for his editorial contributions at DC



 Continued from page 36

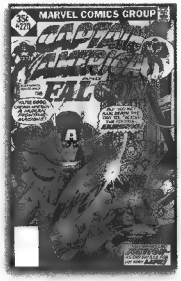
Two, three, four, six, and 10-packs are known to have been released. Later Whitman issues rank among the scarcest Disney comics.

Gold Key didn't always coordinate their cover price increase like Marvel and DC did. *Jungle Twins* #10, with a 20¢ cover, and *Scooby Doo* #26, with a 25¢ cover, are both cover dated July 1974. Perhaps the most noteworthy variation of all is the only time the Gold Key/Whitman numbering system stepped out of sync, which happened between February and March of 1982. The eight-digit numbers below the Gold Key symbol familiar to collectors can be translated to date the comic to the year and month of its publication. The last three digits indicate the year and month.

Whitman comics were published between the months of February and March 1982 because of the numbers "113" which appear on the issues. *Uncle Scrooge* #193 ends with the numbers 202, #195 ends with the numbers 203. Some examples of "113" comics are *Bugs Bunny* #234, *Daffy Duck* #140, *Tweety and Sylvester* #114, and *Uncle Scrooge* #194.

The eight-digit numbering system was disregarded after issues dated May 1982. Five digit numbers without the crucial dating were used from June 1982 until Whitman ceased publication. The only exception I found was *Mickey Mouse* #218, the last issue, which said on the inside "90027-208," which means the last issue was dated August 1982. Although Gold Key and Whitman editions are valued equally in *Overstreet*, I believe the Gold Key versions are more interesting not only because they are the first printings, but also because the Whitman copies delete the eight digit number under the Gold Key logo, making it impossible to date the book without opening it.

It's not common knowledge to many DC Bronze Age collectors, but there are several known Whitman "variant" reprints of DC titles from 1978 with



40¢ covers… and some without a cover price, mainly because it wasn't needed. Whitman reprints were sold in bags, and the DC reprints are known to exist only in Superman and Batman titles. Examples of *Action, Batman, Brave & Bold, Detective, Superboy, Superfriends,* and *Superman* are all known to exist. (Bagged groups of Whitman reprints were primarily sold in drugstores like Revco.)

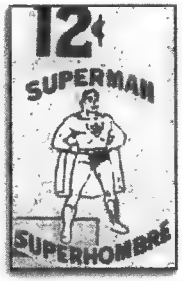
There is yet another group of reprints that were sold in bags, from 1977-78, and which are still today misunderstood and misidentified as regular copies. *Overstreet* mentions *Star Wars* as a Marvel reprint with "a large diamond with no date." Most Marvel popular titles and superhero comics like *Amazing Spider-Man, Iron Man, Micronauts, Thor,* and others, including reprint titles like *Marvel Super-Heroes* and *Marvel Tales*, were reprinted and sold in bagged lots. Some have UPC codes, some don't. Some issues omit an issue's month, or the printing size of the issue number, which could vary month to month.

35¢ Variants (all 1977)

Amaz Spider-Man (172) 169-73 (Jun-Oct)
Avengers 160-64 (Jun-Oct)
Black Panther 4-5 (Jul, Sep)
Captain America 210-14 (Jun-Oct)
Captain Marvel 51-52 (Jul, Sep)
Champions (15) 14-15 (Jul, Sep)
Conan 75-79 (Jun-Oct)
Daredevil (148) 146-48 (Jun-Jul, Sep)
Defenders 48-52 (Jun-Oct)
Doctor Strange 23-25 (Jun, Aug, Oct)
Eternals 12-16 (Jun-Oct)
Fantastic 4 (184) 183-87 (Jun-Oct)
Flintstones 1 (Oct)
Ghost Rider 1-3 (Aug-Oct)
Godzilla (1-2) 1-3 (Aug-Oct)
Howard The Duck 13-17 (Jun-Oct)
Human Fly 1-2 (Sep-Oct)
Incredible Hulk 212-16 (Jun-Oct)
Inhumans 11-12 (Jun, Aug)
Invaders (21) 17-21 (Jun-Oct)
Iron Fist (15) 13-15 (Jun, Aug-Sep)
Iron Man (102) 99-103 (Jun-Oct)
John Carter 1-5 (Jun-Oct)
Kid Colt Outlaw (220) 218-20 (Jun, Aug, Oct)
Kull 21-23 (Jun, Aug, Oct)
Logan's Run 6-7 (Jun-7)
Marvel Premiere 36-38 (Jun, Aug, Oct)
Marvel Presents 11-12 (Jun, Aug)
Marvel's Greatest 71-73 (Jul, Sep-Oct)
Marvel Super Action 2-3 (Jul, Sep)
Marvel Super Heroes 65-66 (Jul, Sep)
Marvel Tales 80-84 (Jun-Oct)
Marvel Team-Up 58-62 (Jun-Oct)
Marvel Triple Action 36-37 (Jul, Sep)
Marvel Two-In-One (28) 28-32 (Jun-Oct)
Master Of Kung-Fu 53-57 (Jun-Oct)
Ms. Marvel (6) 6-10 (Jun-Oct)
Nova (10) (13) 10-14 (Jun-Oct)
Omega (9) 9-10 (Jul, Oct)
Powerman 44-47 (Jun-Aug, Oct)
Rawhide Kid 140-41 (Jul, Sep)
Red Sonja 4-5 (Jul, Sep)
Scooby Doo 1 (Oct)
Sgt. Fury 141-42 (Jul, Sep)
Spectacular Spider-Man (8) (10) 7-11 (Jun-Oct)
Star Wars (1-4) 1-4 (Jul-Oct)
Super-Villain Team-Up 12-14 (Jun, Aug, Oct)
Tarzan 1-5 (Jun-Oct/197)
Thor 260-64 (Jun-Oct)
Tomb Of Dracula 57-60 (Jun-Sep)
2001, A Space Odyssey 7-10 (Jun-Sep)
X-Men (105-106) 105-107 (Jun, Aug, Oct)

The 30¢ and 35¢ covers are most easily recognized by the large diamond in the upper left corner surrounded by black. The later 35¢ reprints from 1978 also have an alteration of the Marvel strip at the top of the comic. *Marvel Tales* #97, and a reprint of *Marvel Tales* #97, are shown as examples, as well as a few others. I often see the Marvel reprints sold as regular copies.

Some comics are variants simply because the publisher made a mistake. *Marvel Spotlight* #1 (7/79) has a variant edition with no issue number on the cover. Some Marvel magazines from the early to mid-1970s were published with no issue numbers on the covers, so you have to open the books to identify them. Some examples are *Deadly Hands Of Kung-Fu* #1 and 2, *Dracula Lives!* #3-7, *Monsters Unleashed* #2-6, *Tales Of The Zombie* #2-6, and *Vampire Tales* #2, 4, and 5. In addition to the two miscolored cover



variants, *Fantastic Four* #110 (5/71, green Thing) and *Sandman* #1 (1974, pink cover), there is a variant *New Gods* #11 (11/72) with a missing DC logo and only parts of the left cover colored.

Although the interior is identical to the US edition, *Super-Villain Team-Up* #9 shown with a 9p price is not a variant but a British edition. British "weeklys" preceded this format, featuring black and white reprints with new color covers and intro pages to splice American stories into a serial format. Many of the covers have that 1970's Marvel "feel" to them and are well worth collecting.

Reprinted material was mostly superhero from the 1960s to early 1970s. Titles sometimes formed strange combinations (e.g. "The Avengers and The Savage Sword Of Conan.")

NO PRICE... NO CONTENT

Sometimes it appears something "fell off" a comic's cover before it could be printed. The cover of *Demon* #15 (12/73) is obviously missing some dialogue, and the cover of *GI Combat* #175 (2/75) is missing the words "the very best" above the 25¢ price, a comment DC added along with 5¢ to the price, and the covers, of some of their books in early 1975.

Some comics have scenes on the cover which go beyond exaggeration and in fact reflect nothing of the book's contents... generally as the result of a missed deadline. *Captain America* #152 (8/72), *Conan* #64 (7/76), *Ghost Rider* #10 (2/75), and *Fantastic Four* #180 (3/77) are all examples. *Captain America* #152 asks Marvel fans on the cover to vote on how they feel about bogus covers, and based on the other, later examples, it looks like they actually got positive feedback!

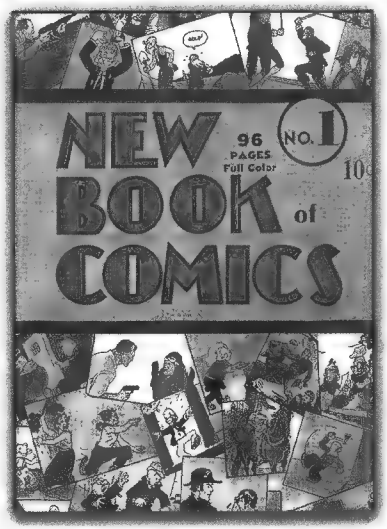
Some publishers occasionally managed to forget the cover price, and some examples include *Beep Beep The Road Runner* #8 (2-4/61), *Cheyenne Kid* #68 (9/68), *Porky Pig* #74 (1-2/61), and *Walt Disney's Comics & Stories* #244 (1/61). Looks like someone at Dell had their mind elsewhere in early 1961!

SUPERHOMBRE?

Finally, here's a puzzle that's 35 years old, the puzzle of the "variant" issue of *Adventure Comics* #304 (1/63). There is a symbol under the 12¢ price which I did not find on any other DC comic from January 1963, or on any DC comic published before or since, and which does not correspond to any anniversary or event which could explain its presence. The "Superman/Superhombre" symbol actually relates to a September 1944 ashcan, *Superman/ Superhombre* #1, which has a 10¢ cover. Ashcans are the ultimate variants, and still unknown to the majority of comics fans.

Pre-Golden Age Cover Variant Discovery!

If you look in Volume II of *Gerber* (page 511) you'll notice that the example of *New Book Of Comics* #1 has no price. For years this was thought to be the only version of this book known. However, a new cover variant has been discovered that has not only a 10¢ cover price but also has the phrase "96 PAGES Full Color" just above the "K" in the logo. It is conjectured that the variant without a price was distributed only to five & dime stores and sundry stores where each book was individually stickered with a price determined by each individual retailer. In contrast, the variant with the 10¢ cover price is thought to have been distributed to the newsstand. (If any *CBM* readers have any additional information on the *New Book Of Comics* #1 cover variant anomaly, please contact us.)



GUEST EDITORIALS

(Continued from page 46)

from the new *Guide Update* comparing values for other issues of Daredevil with the last "Big Book" Guide from April of 1998 (NM value form *Guide* #2 *Update* on the right compared with 1998 *Annual* NM value on the left:

#2	$520	$490	down $30
#3	$350	$330	down $20
#4	$320	$290	down $30
#5	$215	$200	down $15
#6,8,10	$155	$140	down $15
#7	$250	$250	no change
#11-15	$75	$65	down $10
#16-17	$90	$90	no change
#18	$54	$50	down $4
#19-20	$54	$50	down $4

And the decreases go on, through #49, before there's a break in the pattern. Before leaving *Daredevil*, let me just propose that #16 and 17 (Spider-Man x-over battle issues) are easily worth $125 each in true NM with white pages… and should be listed as such.

They are very hard to find in VF/NM condition, much less NM, similar to the situation with *DD* #7. But you'd never know it looking at the *Guide* these past two years, because the books haven't moved one inch in value.

Previously, I extensively addressed grade/price structures for Silver Age issues of *Strange Tales*, so I won't cover that again, except to say that the trend to devalue many of those books even in NM grade had been maintained with the new *Guide Update*. The fact that *ST* #115 (Doc Strange origin issue) dropped $35 in NM from $460 down to $425 is quite troublesome for me since I've never found a copy in even VF+ condition here in the Houston area over the course of nine years, and I've shopped at all of the major stores oriented toward Silver Age and Golden Age material. That just goes to the heart of the admonition that one should price his or her books based (in large part) upon regional factors of supply and demand, and that's why I almost always value my high grade books considerably over and above *Overstreet*'s "running average" figure published in the *Guide* (which is apparently a "moving average" of highest and lowest sales figures submitted by the advisors and market reporters). Other important issues devalued further in the new *Guide* include: *Strange Tales* #111 (2nd Doctor Strange); #114 (Acrobat-Captain America appearance—first since Golden Age); #119 with its Spider-Man cameo (again, why denote that, if you're just going to drop it 25% in NM value, from $115 down to only $90!); #135 (first Nick Fury down 20% from $100 to $80!); and #167 must not be as much of a "Steranko classic cover" as we all thought it was, since it's also down nearly 20% from $38 to $30. I know that I'm never going to find most of these books in even VF+ condition, much less true NM, it flies in the face of reality for me to devalue and price my books in line with the *Overstreet* reductions. This conclusion on my part is based primarily upon my experience in Houston over the better part of the past ten years, and also on some rational-theoretical and economic factors discussed later on. I was also surprised and disappointed to see *Fantasy Masterpieces* dropped in value, particularly the tough-to-find-in-high-grade squarebound issues.

The DC Silver Age title, *The Spectre*, (from 1967-1969) is a good example of SA devaluation, too. (Early issues have Murphy Anderson cover/art.) All the first 10 issues were notably reduced in NM value which further devalues even nice medium-grade copies (*Spectre* #1 is down 10%). A good Bronze Age example of this trend is the recurrent devaluation over time of *Conan The Barbarian* #1 (1970); most recently reduced from $190 down to $160. I've always viewed this book as the "gateway" to 1970's books and as a good demarcation point for the onset of the Bronze Age of Comics. In the 1996, 26th edition of *Overstreet*, this seminal book was listed at $225 NM. It's dropped $65 since 1996.

Here are the rational-theoretical and economic considerations for the argument against the continued devaluation of many of the Silver Age books in high grade. T.J. Johnson is proprietor of the "Third Planet," a large comic and collectibles store in Houston and he's been in the field for many years, dating back to the mid-1970s, (and even way before that, as a collector himself). According to T.J.'s viewpoint (particularly with Silver Age and Golden Age material), once the books go up gradually, over time, they shouldn't go back down again in value. I interpret and elaborate upon that viewpoint in the following way. The stability of our hobby, as a collectibles as well as an investment vehicle, is based upon the principle of "steady, stable growth" over time. This was originally the strength of the Overstreet system for comics values and why it was so superior to publications such as *CVM* (*Comic Values Monthly*) in terms of the realistic value of Silver Age books. We respected *Overstreet* because we had confidence in its emphasis upon gradual and moderate growth of values over time.

In line with T.J.'s viewpoint, I also believe that once a book has experienced that pattern of "steady, stable growth" over the long term (as did many of the Silver Age Marvels through the early to mid 1990s), then the book should not go back down in value just because it has a bad year in 1997, or even a couple of mediocre years. I think it is wrong for one or two bad years to negate and completely wipe out all of the gradual, stable growth established for the book over five to ten years previously. To devalue the book so seriously that it compromises the economic concept of "steady, stable growth," hurts our hobby over the long term.

Historically, the practice also flies in the face of what we originally loved about the *Guide* in the first place: its long term stability of grade/price structures. That doesn't mean you can't have a boom period, such as we experienced in late 1989 and the early 1990s with Silver Age Marvel and DC titles. That boom was fun and exciting, and perhaps long overdue. But don't destroy a book's history of steady growth just because it has one or two mediocre years. Maybe the answer is just not raising its value for the time being. But don't negate what has been established historically over the long term… don't make large 20% and 25% price drops from which the book cannot easily (if at all) recover. Remember *Conan The Barbarian* #1? How long do you think its going to take for that book to regain a value of $225 NM? At its current $160, it could be five to ten years, or maybe it will even drop further over time. The investment value of this seminal book has been decisively squelched for the foreseeable future. And why? Because it had a bad year or two recently. It just doesn't seem

justified and I believe it's a mistake. Such pricing "chop jobs" hurt our hobby considerably and may well also discourage new people from deciding to enter the field of collecting or from becoming dealers themselves.

T. J. Johnson of aforementioned "Third Planet" has proposed a price spread which he indicates that he has adhered to since "Day 1." Basically, T. J. proposes a price spread (particularly on old comics) of 25% - 50% - 100%+ (for low grade, medium grade, and high grade books respectively), and furthermore, that [true] NM copies really go for significantly over NM *Guide* (100%) when you actually find them. The last part of this statement is no surprise to seasoned collectors and dealers, but I love the part about Fine grade books going at 50% of NM *Guide* because it restores respect and value to a much maligned grade category that has suffered the most from the price reductions inaugurated by the *Guide Update* #1 (November 1997); a trend I documented in a previous *CBM* Forum. Apparently, T.J. is not alone in his philosophy, because two of the current advisors/market reporters featured in the new *Guide Update* #2 explicitly indicate similar viewpoints about the FN grade category. And here's the evidence of that.

First, according to Brian Johnson of "All About Books and Comics" in Phoenix, AZ, "On most Silver and key Bronze Age books, our sales seem to agree with both the NM and the GD prices (again, with a few exceptions). HOWEVER, the 1/3/10 spread usually is more like a 1/5/10 spread for us, with FN copies consistently selling for about 50% of NM and VG copies going for 25-30%. We'd recommend switching to the 1/5/10 spread for almost any Marvel, DC, Dell/Gold Key or Tower books before 1970—and, again, for any key Bronze Age books too."

Secondly, consider these comments of Dale and Sheri Moore at "Clarence Road Productions" in Tacoma, WA, "With the current (and plausible) valuation, the hard sell is the FN grade—too costly to validate purchase, yet too valuable to discount greatly. This is where the spread will change the most, almost like a stasis chamber. The collective minds at "Clarence Road" agree that keeping the discounts and letting them remain favorable to buyers makes more sense than devaluing the books. It's just a thought. (Now had FN grades been flying off the shelves, the story would be different.) Recommended price spread for Silver Age books: NM (100%), VF (75%), FN (50%), VG (35%), GD (25%)."

The FN category has historically been one of the most vulnerable categories for overgrading errors... many have a tendency to push a VG+ or VG/FN up to FN. I don't remember who first said that back in the old, first series run of the original *Overstreet Price Update* in the early 1990s, but it's still true today. Similarly, Bob Overstreet and Gary Carter aptly point out this tendency on page 30 of their landmark *Grading Guide* (1992): "Note: Fine has historically been the most difficult grade to identify. It is the highest grade which allows a wide range of defects to occur."

And furthermore, they state: "... Many books offered for sale are inaccurately graded as Fine. Collectors should carefully examine all books labeled with this grade for brittle or extremely brown pages."

Many have suggested that the main reason FN was devalued down from 40% to 30% of the *Guide* NM price value was because so many dealers were reporting and complaining about their FN grade books not moving unless significantly discounted. But if many of those "no-sellers" or "slow sellers" were actually overgraded VG+ or VG/FN copies touted as being Fine by the dealers, then no wonder their "FNs" didn't move well at conventions, mail order, etc. Apparently, the continued and often very vocal complaints of dealers about this issue had some role in the eventual devaluation of Fine.

So consider the possibility that this change in *Guide* value for this grade category may well have been based (at least in part) upon some inadvertently skewed data (reported sales of "Fines"), i.e.; the sales of supposedly FN grade books which were really overgraded VGs and VG+s, and thus overpriced books. That's a really hard argument to prove of course, but I can just suggest it as a possibility. Anyway, my wish for all collectors and dealers would be that you not become complacent about FN being at a lowly 30% of NM *Guide* value.

And now that I've addressed everyone else's grade/price structures, let me just suggest my own, based upon my experience as a collector for the better part of the past 10 years. I plan to use this spread the next time I go through and re-price my collection, after the next annual *Overstreet Guide* comes out in April 1999.

NM.....125%+
VF/NM.....100%
VF+ w/white pages.....80%
FN/VF.....60%
FN+ w/nice pages.....40%
VG.....20%
GD.....10%

I'll conclude with the changes I did like about the price values in the new *Guide* #2: Thanks for raising Dell/Gold Key TV photo covers in value; titles like *Bewitched* and *Hogan's Heroes*—they deserved it. Ditto with Tower's *Thunder Agents*. Glad to see tough square-bounds of *Marvel Collectors' Item Classics* given a little boost: a lot of us grew up reading those first reprints in the mid-'60s and it made us want to go out and find the original books, such as *Fantastic Four, Tales of Suspense, Strange Tales*, and *The Incredible Hulk* (first series #s 1-6).

Speaking of which, my favorite comic book of all time continues to get its due in *Overstreet. Fantastic Four* #4 (1st Silver Age Sub-Mariner) went up $100 in NM. That's truly an historic book, tying us back to the Golden Age with "ol' Subby." I was also glad to see an increase on some of the 1968 Marvel "break-out" titles which put previously anthologized characters such as Iron Man and Captain America into their own books, from *Tales of Suspense*, etc. However, I would have liked to have seen more of these titles increase. Those 1968 "break-out" character titles are now 30 years old! And some cite that point in '68 as the "real" end of the Silver Age, since it ended the big four anthology series: *Suspense, Tales to Astonish, Strange Tales,* and *Journey Into Mystery* (ended 1966).

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THE MICHAEL NAIMAN REPORT

Gotta get it before the price goes up!

With the New Year upon us and the new Guide only a few months away, the hobby is gearing up for one of the busiest non-convention times of the year... the Annual Pre-Guide "Gotta-Get-It-Before-The-Price-Goes-Up" buying frenzy! Opportunities abound for those collectors who are eagerly searching for their special books.

Hellbound for Squarebounds

There are still many bargains out there for the discerning collector on a realistic comic book budget. This past year has seen an increased interest in square-bound giant-sized issues. Granted, there are many squarebounds with huge price tags (Vacation Parade #1, Peter Pan Treasure Chest, Donald Duck Fun Book #1 & 2, Christmas Parade #1 & 2 , Strange Tales Annual #1 & 2, Fantastic Four Annual #1, and, of course, the EC group) however, there's also a group of books that can be purchased for a reasonable price in high grade. Before we get to these titles and their prices, let's look at why squarebounds might be more difficult to locate in the higher grades.

According to noted squarebound authority and collector Bill Howard, "One has to look at what makes these books different from all other comics. Aside from the perfect binding, when it comes to grading these books, there are many different types of defects to look for which can make a difference in the esthetic evaluation, final grade, and ultimately the cost. Many squarebounds will have glue ripples on the front and back of the book along the spine. Compression of the spine at the top and bottom is always a concern. Is the title centered on the spine and is the spine free of grooves and indentations? I call this type of defect "spine pucker." The kiss of death to many of these books occurs when the overzealous reader cracks open their prized possession for the first time and causes a color breaking bend or crease about 1/4 inch along the spine from top to bottom. This is just as bad as a subscription crease to me and virtually ruins the book... taking it out of the high grade category.

"In squarebounds that have staples, always be alert to the possibility of the staple making a damaging impression on the front or back cover. Storage of the books can also be a concern. I place my books in a 2 mil mylite and then place them into a magazine sized mylar. I've seen people ram these into undersized mylars which can cause the cover to compress and bend."

While many of these titles offer reprints, for many collectors, this is the only avenue where they'll be able to read some of the great GA stories that they couldn't afford to purchase via the single issue route. Titles that will not bankrupt your purchasing plans and that are still relatively cheap include Marvel Collectors Item Classics (NM prices ranging from $60 for #1 to $12 for #22); Fantasy Masterpieces (Vol #1 issues #3-11) which contain many GA reprints, ranging again in the NM price from $60-30; Marvel Tales #2-32 (NM prices from $80-$12 each); and Marvel Super-Heroes #12-20.

Unfortunately, the DC-squarebound horse has left the barn and darn few of these can still be had at their old, inexpensive, rate. For the past year, savvy collectors have been pouncing on these books whenever they appear. Still to be found bargains are some of the Charlton and the Gold Key titles.

Tumbleweed Connection

This last year saw the passing of American singing cowboy icons Gene Autry and Roy Rogers. While many of us grew up with the King of the Cowboys' TV show featuring Dale Evans, Pat Brady and my favorite jeep (Nellie Belle), another older generation became familiar with these stars via radio and the rootin' tootin' Republic movies.

During the peak of the cowboy craze, there were comic books that featured the likes of Roy, Gene, Dale Evans, Johnny Mack Brown, Hopalong *(Cont. on page 66)*

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There's been a surge in both buyers and sellers on ebay in the last couple of months as word gets around. Many of the big dealers/spenders have found their way there, and it's interesting to see how they react. Some are there strictly for buying, others try to sell some books. One dealer tried to put some high end books up, but they all passed because people on ebay "want a deal" and no one's got a huge amount of money to spend. It doesn't matter if it's a high grade Tec #35 or a VF copy of Spidey #1, they just won't bring the high bids. If the book's worth more than $500, I'd say you'd be hard pressed to get what you'd like for it.

Grading standards are lower on ebay too, because many of the sellers had little to no experience with grading until ebay came along. So proceed with caution, especially on lots with no picture scans. And make sure there's a return policy in force. It's a seller's market on ebay, especially for the low grade, inexpensive stuff priced $500 and down. DC and Timely do the best (especially Timely), followed by Nedor, MLJ, Fox, Quality and Fiction House. Fawcett's bring up the rear, as do the throwaway Golden Age titles. Most ebay people are "meat and potatoes" buyers, and they want the titles with the most recognizable characters. The esoteric market will probably not bloom fully for some time, since its market is much smaller. It'll take time for most to catch up with the latest fads.

Golden Age Sales: Action #58 GD/VG $72.00; Batman #19 VG *(Cont. on page 66)*

◆◆ CBM MarketWatch ◆◆

A report of market indicator sales (including % of Guide) by Michael Naiman

Action
#21 FR $105 91%
#40 FN+ $285 95%
#104 FN ....$140...Guide
#119 GD ....$56....1.19X
#252 GD ....$133....1.17X
#252 VG $145 64%
#288 GD.... $7 1.27X

Adventure
#[illegible] VG+ $119 56%
#[illegible] FR $50 1.1X
#[illegible] VG $16 61%
#200 NM $675 1.1X

All-Star
#36 VG $243 50%
#14 VG $600 1.4X
#15 VG $[illegible] [illegible]%
#17 FN+ $695 1.48X

Amazing Spider-Man
#1 GD $[illegible] 1.29X
#1 GD $556 79%
#3 VG+ $242 79%
#3 VG $252 82%
#[illegible] FN $179 90%
#[illegible] NM $[illegible] 85%
#12 VF $224 76%
#[illegible] FN $84 79%
#100 VF+ $84 81%
#121 NM $85 89%

Archie
#1 FR $550 1.04X
#25 NM/MT....$400 1.45X

Batman
#19 FN $402 0.86
#28 FR $85 1.42X
#32 VG+ $204 1.15X
#54 GD+ $90 1.43X

Brave & Bold
#28 GD $900 56%
#[illegible] VG $[illegible] [illegible]%
#34 VG $140 47%
#35 GD $96 59%

Detective
#47 FN+ $366 69%
#51 VG+ $[illegible] 91%
#122 VF.. $295 47%
#132 VG $63 63%
#142 FN $387 1.37X

Fantastic Four
#[illegible] FN $225 60%
#[illegible] FR $[illegible] 1.56X
#[illegible] FN $106 55%
#13 FN+ $105 85%

#14 VF- $181 96%
#[illegible] VF $[illegible] [illegible]%
#42 NM $[illegible] 1.18X
#42 VF $[illegible] [illegible]%
#44 FN $[illegible] [illegible]%
#45 FN $134 [illegible]%
#46 FN $[illegible] [illegible]%
#47 VG+ $139 59%
#48 GD $[illegible] Guide
#48 FR $35 90%

Flash
(Silver Age) #105 VG $600 90%
#106 VG $220 94%

Hulk
#181 NM $425 94%

JLA
#73 VF $95 1.17X
#94 NM $[illegible] Guide
#100 NM $35 1.16X

Jungle
#[illegible] GD $150 1.83X

Ken Shannon
#1 GD+ $26 84%

Kid Cowboy
#3 FN $90 1.18X

Marvel Spotlight
#2 VF $75 1.88X

Marvel Tales
#[illegible] FN+ $71 72%

Miracle Comics
#1 FR $46 60%

Monsters (Fiction House)
#1 F $100 93%

More Fun
#[illegible] FN+ $900 1.57X

My Secret Story
#28 VF $195 6.50X

Night Nurse
#[illegible] NM $65 1.44X

Our Army at War
#[illegible] VF $140 1.72X
#128 VF $250 2.14X

#164 VF $60....1.33X
#249 VF $75....3.30X

Pep
#22 FR $450 91%

Perfect Crime
#20 VF.....$180....4.97X

Planet
#8 VG.....$295.....89%

Police
#1 FN+ $1,331.....74%
#8 FN $520....1.11X

Rawhide Kid
#43 NM.....$110....1.57X

Real Fact
#1 FN .....$150...Guide

Rocky Lane Western
#1 GD $60 79%

Roy Rogers
#20 VG $18 Guide
#24 FN $24 1.09X
#27 VG ..$26.....1.7X

Sea Devils
#1 VF.....$435....1.40X

Sensation
#[illegible] VG $159....1.06X
#[illegible] FN+ $185....1.06X
#89 VG... $55 1.16X
#108 FN. $145 1.15X

Showcase
#6 GD..... $200 92%
#9 FR $250 85%
#[illegible] GD $[illegible] 1.02X
#[illegible] GD $300 1.07X
#[illegible] GD $32 88%
#33 VG $35 46%
#[illegible] NM $[illegible] 88%
#57 FN $35 [illegible]%
#60 VG $[illegible] 46%

Silver Surfer
#12 VF $32...Guide

Space Adventures
#13 VF.....$100....1.21X
#33 FN .....$56.....60%

Star Spangled
#54 VG $100 1.85X

Star Trek
#3 FN $55 1.05X
#21 FN $23 1.39X

Strange Tales
#[illegible] VG $38 86%
#82 VG $[illegible] 1.18X
#[illegible] FN $[illegible] 1.11X
#130 VF+ $39 60%

Strange Tales Annual
#[illegible] FN $148 1.23X

Superboy
#[illegible] FN $484 Guide
#86 VG $24 Guide

Supergirl
#1 NM $94 Guide

Superman
#[illegible] VG $185 69%
#[illegible] VG+ $[illegible] [illegible]%
#[illegible] VG+ $[illegible] 1.16X
#87 VF $250 Guide
#109 FN+ $100 1.92X

Suspense
#4 GD $350 2.10X

Tales of Suspense
#[illegible] VF $[illegible] 1.05X
#52 VG $[illegible] 48%
#57 VF $103 1.07X

Tales of the Unexpected
#[illegible] FN $[illegible] 73%

Tales to Astonish
#[illegible] NM $50 Guide
#[illegible] VF $30 [illegible]%
#100 NM $50 Guide

Terrific
#3 FR $46 42%

Terrifying Tales
#[illegible] VG+ $67 91%

Thing!
#[illegible] VF $650 1.83X

Thrilling
#[illegible] NM MH,$1,100 5.40X

Unusual Tales
#1 FN $80....1.33X

Vault of Horror
#34 FN $56 77%

Weird Science
#14 FN $67 78%
#15 GD $50 72%

Weird Science Fantasy
#28 GD $14.....45%

Western Thrillers (Atlas)
#1 VF.....$110....1.22X

Whiz
#2 (#3) G/G+.$600....1.54X

Wings
#[illegible] VG $[illegible] 57%

Witching Hour
#[illegible] NM $80 1.14X
#9 NM $35 1.40X

Women in Love
#[illegible] FN $63 1.08X

Wonder Woman
#[illegible] VG+ $138....1.46X
#105 F $300 2.5X

World's Finest
#[illegible] EX+ $330 99%
#3 FN $556 69%
#14 GD+ $140 1.26X
#60 VG $60 65%
#72 FN $175 1.24X

X-Men
#[illegible] GD+ $306 83%
#[illegible] VG $133 48%
#9 VG $55 94%
#11 FN $65 93%
#50 NM $41 74%
#56 VF $35 98%

Yellow Claw
#1 FR $55 1.33X

Zago
#3 FN+ $103 89%

Cassidy, Ken Maynard, and even Roy's horse Trigger! Today there is still a small but active group of collectors who seek out these books. Not coincidentally, these collectors are the same male dominated group ages 50-60 who listened to the prairie potboilers on the radio and spent their hard earned nickels and dimes to attend the Saturday matinee.

Dealers Jef Hinds (Jef Hinds Comics), Doc Robinson (Doc Robinson's Comics) and Gene Carpenter (All American Comics & Collectibles) report a strong demand for many of these titles, and not necessarily in high grade condition. You can find Fine condition items in the $30 and less range throughout most of these runs. Collectors of this genre are completists and not investor driven. Grab your Gerber Guide and take a gander at many of the fabulous photo covers that graced the newsstands during the '50s.

Along with westerns, the early '50s saw a burgeoning of the western-romance sub-genre. Who can forget such epic runs as Western Love, Real West Romances, Saddle Romances, Cowboy Love, and others??

Many cowboy classics also featured great artists of the Silver Age and Golden Age. You can still lasso these books at very reasonable prices... if you can find 'em! Rawhide Kid featured the artistic skills of Kirby, Ayers, Severin, Tuska, Everett and Colan; Kid Colt Outlaw spotlighted Heath, Maneely, Crandall and Williamson and Western Gunfighters had Crandall, Toth, Wood and Powell in their corral. As we start the countdown to the 21st Century, don't be surprised to see a surge of interest in mid-20th century comics that idyllically portray the late 19th century of a romanticized American frontier!

Marketplace Forecast

I'm wondering if there will be some upward pricing adjustments in a few of the mainstream Golden Age DC titles (Batman, Superman, Wonder Woman, Action) in next year's Guide? After this year's downward adjustment on many GA titles in the GD and FN category, many of the major dealers complained just after Guide publication (to me anyway) that these books were selling perfectly well at the existing '97 prices and that they felt the demand was still strong among collectors. A possible upward pricing realignment in these lower grades might not be made overnight, but, as some suggest, it could happen slowly over a two year period so as not to "shock" the comic book dealers/investors economic applecart. Radical changes in the Guide could bring the hobby to another screeching financial stop, as many felt it did, right after the introduction of OPG #28 (for about 6-8 wks).

One of the positive results realized from last year's adjustments was the awakening and rejuvenation of a portion of the marketplace that was heretofore unable to purchase "reader" copies of their favorite books. No better example of this buying habit can be found than in the fan favorite Fantastic Four title. Take a look at this month's MarketWatch and see just how popular reading copies of Fantastic Four #48 have been in recent months!

Legions on line

I think that many longtime mail-order and convention-only dealers had better wake up and smell the ink very soon unless they want to get left behind in the now burgeoning marketplace of on-line transactions. For years now, a few "High Grade Only" dealers have poo-poo'ed the VG/FN market because they perceived that there just wasn't enough money to be made with these clients. Guess what? There's a whole lot more collectors out there who'll pay for VG/FN than there are high-grade buyers. The mistake of arrogance by some dealers could prove to be their financial downfall. With the Internet connection available to an ever growing population, physical proximity to big cities, major dealers and/or stores is now moot... access to collections, hobbyists and sellers is just a modem connection away.

(To balance all the good news about buying on the net, collectors should also be aware that low and mid grade material is almost always overgraded. This now-notorious problem can *(Cont. on page 69)*

MARKET REPORTS

Continued from page 64

$207, #27 GD $86, #61 GD/VG $70, #73 VG $109, #77 GD/VG $61, #85 VG $85; Detective #120 FR/PR $22, #125 FR $18, #173 VG $54, #183 GD/VG $41; Exciting #30 FR/PR $38.50; Plastic Man #13 GD/VG #35.50; Rangers #19 FR $15.50; Superman #18 VG- $200, #21 GD/VG $130; World's Finest #28 GD/VG $51.

Silver Age Sales: Avengers #3 VG $46; Batman #92 GD $30, #114 VG+ $60, #139 VG $32, #148 VG $24; Detective #235 GD+ $32, #239 VG $26, #312 VF+ (sl. clr tch) $24, #194 FR+ $28, #217 FR/GD $26 #233 GD $100 Green Lantern #1 VG/FN $250.

Atom Age Sales: All-True Crime #47,50 set GD $15; Charlie Chan #6 (rare) GD $50!! Famous Crimes #15 FN $24; Ideal #1 (2nd) FN+ $76; Krazy #13 VG $18, Man #3 VG $7; Police #111 VG/FN $17; Terry Toons #3 VG $55, #5 FN/VF $42, #6 FN $40, #35 FN+ $14, #47 VF/NM $41; True Adventures #3 VG $19.

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Golden Age demand is extremely healthy. As in all areas of collecting, there are high-grade and low-grade enthusiasts, but, for GA books, the two compliment each other perfectly for our inventory. Currently, we have 9 copies of Batman #20... one in very high grade. This is roughly the ratio of high-grade to low grade buyers of this type of material. Understandable when you consider that a VG copy is worth about $300 and a VF/NM is worth approximately $2,000. The point is that for GA books, dealers need an inventory that is diverse in condition as well as title. For expensive books customers appreciate the option of buying the book in a lower grade.

The attractiveness of Bronze Age books is considerable. They are available in all conditions, with an ample number in high grade. Condition in these books does not translate into a deterrent because of price. There is a personal connection and familiarity with the material for many buyers. The art work is often excellent and many perceive this Age to be the New Frontier, wide open and ripe with opportunities. All these factors make for something that is often lacking in other collecting areas... genuine enthusi- *(Cont. on page 68)*

PACIFIC COMIC EXCHANGE, INC.

1998 YEAR IN REVIEW

BY ROBERT J. ROTER

Pacific Comic Exchange (PCE) specializes exclusively in vintage comic books and operates in the same manner as a real estate brokerage house. Prices are negotiable between buyer and seller and all sales are documented through the PCE Monthly Listing Report.

This year we saw a tremendous improvement in the comic market. The market seemed to have hit a bottom around December of 1997 after a steep decline that began in August of 1995. Sales at PCE saw an increase of over 30% from 1997. There were several high ticket sales this year that included an ultra high grade copy of Wonder Woman #1 and the Larson copy of Marvel Comics #1.

The first quarter of 1998 saw sales approach levels not seen since the boom year of 1995. However, there was a noticeable drop in the comic market this year shortly after the Overstreet Price Guide hit the stands. This decline lasted close to six weeks and was most probably due to the significant lowering of values in the new Price Guide. The pricing decrease (mostly for low and mid-grade comics) was unprecedented. Adjustments of 10% to 30% were common across a broad spectrum of books. The clear effect was to exacerbate a weak market already struggling to rebound. Buyers getting discounts from the 1997 Guide listings were now still expecting similar rebates from a new adjusted 1998 Guide. After a short pause, the market slowly absorbed the new listings and continued to show signs of recovery.

In summary, the comic market has been picking up steam all year. With the stock market going through unprecedented volatility, there seems to be more people looking for alternate investments. A lot of comic collectors are coming back into the market after a long absence and new ones are entering for the first time. Also, the continued rise in popularity of the Internet is spurring more activity as collectors enjoy this new medium for purchasing and selling comics. The comic market has shown tremendous resiliency in the face of the biggest and longest decline since the early 1980s. Overall, I am very optimistic over the long term outlook for the comic market as 1999 approaches.

Sample sales for 1998 (prices include the 12% buyer's commission).

Action
#54 VF/VF+ $588
#114 NM++ (MH) $2,240
#133 VF/VF+ ...$336
#267 VG $73

Adventure
#11 NM+ $4,704
#22 VG+ $336
#23 FR $112
#27 GD $101
#47 NM+ $1,344
#51 GD $952
#55 VF/NM $952
#56 NM- $1,120
#77 GD/VG $213
#97 FN+ $213
#141 NM/MT....$728
#152 FN+.....$151
#174 VG+.....$56
#187 VG+.....$84

Amaz. Spider-Man
#1 FN+.....$1,904
#4 GD $146
#4 VG+.....$224
#5 VF- $784
#6 VG/FN $112
#11 VG/FN $95
#12 NM.....$588
#14 FN/VF $420
#15 VF- $196
#16 FN- $101
#16 NM.....$420
#18 FN+.....$106
#19 FN $78
#19 VF.....$112
#20 VG+.....$67
#20 VG/FN $101
#20 VF+ $168
#21 FN- $67
#22 NM- $168
#24 VF++.....$95
#26 VF- $84
#30 VF+ $56
#30 NM.....$252

Avengers
#2 VG+ $90
#4 VG/FN $118

Batman
#4 VF- $2,520
#12 VG $336
#28 NM.....$1,568
#65 NM- $728

Boy Commandoes
#7 NM/MT (MH) $1,848

Detective
#36 FR $1,120
#84 NM++ (Penn) $3,248
#93 NM+ $1,120
#109 GD $67
#111 FN/VF $336
#113 FN $252
#168 VG+.....$532
#258 VF+.....$235

Fantastic Four
#1 VG+.....$1,120
#2 NM.....$5,376
#3 VG/FN.....$336
#5 VG/FN $280
#21 FN- $67
#31 VF- $56
#33 VF.....$73
#35 VF/NM.....$90
#48 FN- $134
#48 FN- $196
#48 VF.....$336

Flash (Golden Age)
#14 VG/FN $392
#93 GD/VG $95
#94 VG/FN $308

Flash (Silver Age)
#105 FR/GD.....$224
#123 VF/NM.....$605
#137 GD/VG $56

Forbidden Worlds (All White Mtn.)
#101 NM+ $106
#102 NM+ $123
#103 NM++.....$123
#104 NM+ $106
#105 NM.....$106
#106 NM/MT....$134
#107 NM.....$106
#108 NM++.....$106
#109 NM+ $123
#112 NM.....$106
#113 NM- $106
#115 NM- $106
#119 NM+ $106

Gorgo (All White Mtn.)
#5 NM+ $196
#6 NM++ $196
#7 NM+ $179
#8 VF/NM $151
#9 NM/MT $196
#10 NM/MT $190
#14 NM- $140

Incredible Hulk
#1 GD/VG $728
#5 VF/NM.....$1,260
#6 VG+.....$112
#107 NM++.....$56
#108 NM/MT.....$56
#109 NM++.....$56
#110 NM++.....$56

JLA
#1 GD $84
#4 VG+.....$84
#9 VG+.....$56

Marvel Mystery
#1 (Larson)..$48,000
#2 FN-.....$4,984
#5 VG+.....$4,480
#8 FR $336
#30 FN+.....$728
#89 NM++ (MH) $4,760

More Fun
#100 NM+ (San Francisco).....$2,464
#101 NM (Double cover).....$17,920

Mystery in Space
#12 VF.....$308
#53 VG+.....$101
#53 VF+.....$1,904
#58 VG/FN.....$56

Phantom Lady
#15 VG+.....$448
#17 NM+ $6,944

Showcase
#2 VG/FN $280
#4 FR/GD.....$896
#8 FN- $1,568
(#15-19 Mohawk)
#15 VF/VF+...$2,072
#16 VF+.....$1,008
#18 VF++.....$1,344
#19 VF++.....$1,568
#22 FN $448
#23 FN $392

Space Adventures
#27 NM/MT (White Mtn.).....$448
#28 NM- $101
#29 NM++.....$123
#30 NM/MT.....$140
#31 NM/MT.....$392
#32 NM+ $370

Superman
#2 FN- $2,688
#2 FN+.....$5,040
#3 VF- $5,600
#4 FN/VF $3,696
#5 VF- $3,024
#6 GD/VG $364
#8 VG/FN $543
#17 VG $336
#22 GD $129
#27 GD $123
#31 NM+ $1,232
#33 NM++....$1,344
#38 NM.....$1,120
#62 NM.....$784
#71 NM- $678
#73 NM/MT.....$896
#93 NM- $588
#167 NM.....$157

Wonder Woman
#1 NM++....$44,800
($25.8K cash & $19K trade)
#5 NM+ $1,904
#5 NM/MT (MH) $5,208
#5 NM/MT (MH) $5,600
#9 NM/MT (MH) $4,480
#9 NM/MT (MH) $4,648

World's Finest
#13 GD $112
#19 NM+ (Allentown).....$2,464
#71 GD $224
#79 VF- $202

X-Men
#1 FN- $1,008
#3 VF- $235
#4 GD $56
#7 VF/NM.....$224
#9 VF/NM.....$202

Continued from page 66

asm! It is disheartening to observe some collectors dragging their way through conventions, purchasing great material in a perfunctory manner. This is our segue into our observations about the state of the Silver Age.

SA needs shaking up! The high grade collector is solely a Near Mint collector. Lower grades are plentiful. We have at least 10 copies of every Silver Age Key, from FF #1 to Showcase #4 in all conditions. The changing spreads in the prices/condition of these books should be recognized as "buying opportunities." Many of these books are excellent deals in lower grades. Is it bad to have 11 copies of Amazing Spider-Man #1? We don't think so. There's something for everyone's wallet. We have calls for Monte Hall, Buzzy, Plop, Bingo, Steve Canyon and T-Man… these are books that people are looking for! If you have the inventory, you can see the depth and diversity of interest in the hobby, and you can come to the happy conclusion that the comic book market is very strong.

Recent Sales: Amazing Fantasy #15 NM- $27,500; Detective #1 VG/FN (unrestored) $30,000, #96 NM $800, #400 NM- $165; Green Lantern #76 VF $150; House of Secrets #92 NM- $550; Incredible Hulk #1 VF $5,800; More Fun #52 VG/FN $8,400.

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Sales are at roughly the same level as last year. DC Silver Age is still strong as always. Marvels are definitely coming back after a couple of lackluster years. Some Marvel titles such as Avengers, Hulk and Iron Man are finally starting to move again. I've sold extensive amounts of Dell westerns at Guide recently and that trend will be here for some time to come. Archie comics and Little Lulu before 1965 are solid sellers for me as well.

Recent Sales: Action #119 VG+ $115; Adventure #70 GD- $120, #150 FN $140; All American Men of War #10 VF/NM $265; All Star #55 VG $195; Amazing Spider-Man #2 GD- $195, #4 GD $138; Batman #25 VG $300, #27 FN+ $650, #30 FN+ $480, #33 VF/NM $825, #39 VF $550; Boy's Ranch #6 NM $30; Classics #16 NM (O) $320, #16 VF (O) $75; Detective #39 GD- $445, #44 VG $425; #59 FN $440, #71 VG+ $285, #73 VG $200, #78 FN+ $395, #84 VF+ $545; Fantastic Four #1 VG+ $1700, #5 GD $200.

Overstreet Price Guide #2 VF/NM (in original envelope!) $510; Slave Girl #2 VG $140; Tom Mix (Ralston) #2 G $90, #4 VG $115; Weird Horrors #9 FN $98; Western Thrillers #1 VG/FN $100; X-Men #3 VG+ $130.

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Vault Comic Auctions has just held its November auction with another successful list of sales results. Many of our lots are finding new homes in the US, France, Germany, Australia, and Italy, to name just a few. We are also finding that collectors from these and other countries seem to be offering individual items and collections for consignment. Best wishes and a Happy New Year to all!

November auction results: Adventure Comics #267 App VG $66; Amazing Spider-Man #21 NM- $560, #30 NM- $330; Boy Commandos #1 (1973) NM $27; Brick Bradford #6 FN+ $324; Dark Mansion Of Forbidden Love #3 & 4 FN $45 (pair); DC 100Pg Super Spectacular #8 & #14 VF & NM- $112 (pair); 80Pg Giant #3 VF $108; Fantastic Four #15 VF $200, #52 NM- $325; Fighting Hero #7 & Komix Illustrated #12 [Fanzines-collection of Paul Gambaccini] $60 (pair); Ltd Collectors Edition #C-33 VF+ $22; Rudolph 80 Pg Annual (1962/63) VG- $33; Showcase #55 NM- $430; Star Spangled Comics #1 VG+ $1075; Strange Tales Ann. #1 FN+ $208; Superman #76 App FN+ $445; Terrors Of The Jungle #7 FN+ $167; Thrilling Wonder Stories V17 #1 (cvr re-used in Jimmy Olsen #53), V18 #1 [Pulps] GD/VG- $100 (pair).

Outside auction sales include: Jumbo Comics #95 NM- $160, #98 VF+ $130; Superman #134 NM- $260; Torchy #3 FN- $135; 100 Page Super Spectacular #4 VF+ $265. Is there any other comic with a greater black surface area (front and back cover) than this one?! I believe that this book is slightly more common than the #5, but a lot tougher in solid NM, and in addition it has a great Wrightson cover. One of the many, still undervalued (in high grade) '70's books.

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Shows in my area are becoming almost non-existent… So where are the "dinosaur" comic guys supposed to sell? I've been selling a lot on ebay. This was a secret we were all keeping that everyone already knew about! The buyers on ebay don't always want a deal, but be fair… or you won't sell anything!

Not everything sold at the price expected, but almost everytning I put on sold. There are some books that I let go because they have been in my inventory for too long. I sold five (one for each title) lots of ECs for about 60-75% of Guide, but, they were all low grade horror books about 25 books in all. I was happy to sell Fair to VG ECs at that and I made a few people happy to get them. I figure if I have to carry a comic to a couple of shows and I haven't gotten a bite, it's time for a little creative discounting. This is where ebay comes in. I have recently placed my entire Silver Age Marvel and DC inventory on a website and, in addition, I link each item I offer for sale on ebay to the website (www.super-con.com/comicindex.html). I hope everyone had a great Christmas and holiday season.

Recent Sales: All American #71 GD/GD+ $67.50; All Star Western #10 FN $51; Amazing Spider-Man #25 in FN+/VF $93; Avengers #100 VF $34.75; Batman #200 FN+ $33; Captain America #100 VF $178.38; Crypt of Terror #19 GD $177.50; Fantastic Four #48 FN+ $195, #73 VF $20.52; House of Secrets #92 FN+ $152.50; Pep Comics #30 GD- $70; Sub-Mariner #1 VF $66; Sub-Mariner #42 (Atlas) GD $75; Young Love #109 FN+ $43.

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I sell mostly Bronze and Silver Age comics on the internet and at local DC area shows. There has been a definite *(Cont. on page 69)*

upswing of interest in "off" Marvel and DC Bronze titles, including all romance books, funny animal and humor books. Condition is not that important because they simply do not come to the market in quantity. Significant premiums over Guide are being paid for high grade comics, especially Marvel and DC romance books.

What does not sell well for me, either on the internet or at shows, are mainstream superhero titles published after 1975. The majority of these titles sell only at deep discounts! Exceptions to this rule are The Uncanny X-Men (which sells at or near Guide) and books that feature an interesting crossover or a first appearance. I'm looking for 30¢ Marvel variant titles from 1976. If anybody has 30¢ copies of Mighty Marvel Western #44-46 or Iron Man #89, let me know!

Silver Age Sales: Showcase #5 VG/FN $150; FF #37 VF $87, #42 VF $48, #46 VF $60.

Bronze Age Sales: Batman #230 NM (Adams cover) $12.50; Incredible Hulk #162 NM (first Wendigo) $7; L'il Kids #4 GD/VG $4, #5 GD/VG $4; Millie the Model #200 VG $5.50; My Love #4 FN $8.50, #28 NM $20.50, #30 NM $25, #31 NM $31, #34 NM $26; Our Love Story #5 VF (Steranko) $28, #11 NM $21.50; Peter the Little Pest #1 FR $5; Spidey Super Stories #1 FN/VF $7; Sugar and Spike #88 FN $7; Super DC Giant S-17 (Love 1970) FN $75, S-19 (Jerry Lewis) VF $42, S-21 (Love 1971) FN $90; Swing With Scooter #25 NM $15.52; Thor #246 30¢ variant cover NM $8, #247 30¢ variant cover NM $10.

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The true collector's market remains quite strong. The Nostalgia Zone has trouble with the mumblings of dealers who complain about low-end stuff not moving much in the marketplace. There is an enormous customer base out there looking for good, solid and complete Silver Age and earlier comics... for reading, enjoying and collecting. If the price is reasonable and affordable, Guide value is ignored. Not everyone in this hobby is an investor. Sure, all collectors have quirks: no tape, no white edges, no water damage. But ultimately if the story is complete, the cover attached, and the comic a fond memory or that elusive missing

MICHAEL NAIMAN REPORT

Continued from page 66

be partly attributed to the number of novice graders/collectors/sellers making their first appearance on-line.)

CompuComicCollectors with a large inventory can now access the worldwide buying population where they can hawk their low and mid-grade wares without the tremendous overhead that comes with being a "full-timer." Adjustments in attitude and awareness of collector sensitivity are necessary if one is to survive in the "business" of comic books. Unlike previous years, collectors have a world of choices available to them. It will be imperative that one is flexible and willing to adapt to a changing marketplace in order to endure.

To slab or not to slab

On the comic book hobby's horizon is a new East Coast operation that will be specializing in grading comic books for a fee. Owned by those who have brought this service to the coin and trading card world, it has been reported that this operation will utilize a new grading system which will also include "slabbing" the books. Slabbing is the encasement of an object in a tamperproof officially-sealed container. How their grading differs from the existing 100 point system developed by Carter and Overstreet in 1993 remains to be seen. There has been no public disclosure, discussion or discourse among the collecting community regarding the proposed new 10 point grading system. Was there something unworkable with the old system? (It has taken nearly a decade for people to get used to the 100 point system.)

It has been disclosed that there will be a group of individuals involved that have had no previous experience in grading comic books. They're going to learn "on the job." What are their qualifications? Have they written articles about grading? Have they participated in national panel discussions on grading at the ComicCon International? Do they belong to any of our hobby's national fan organizations? Have they ever participated in grading committees at Sotheby's, Christies, or other auction houses? Many long time hobbyists have observed that it takes years of experience looking at thousands of different books from different eras to develop accurate grading skills. Auction houses have often had to deal with concerns from consignors over handling by interested purchasers of valuable and rare books. Who will be allowed to touch and examine them, what type of experience do they have with rare books? This question will probably also arise with the new grading service and their "neophyte" graders.

It has also been suggested that this new company will bring "new money" into the collecting field by the "standardization" of grading by an uninterested third party. My sources say that this service will "guarantee" the grade that they have assigned to the book. (I'm still not sure how one would "guarantee" a grade.) What does this mean? This new enterprise will not be buying or selling comics, thus having an "arms-length" relationship in any financial transaction that might be involved.

While the unique grading system and designation might instill confidence in the novice collector/investor unsure of his own skills and detection abilities, seasoned collectors may well continue to rely on their own grading capabilities. Additionally, the new-to-the-market buyers will soon learn that it is usually easier to buy from... and tougher to sell back to... a dealer no matter what grade is "guaranteed." The success or failure of this new enterprise will, as in any business, depend upon whether the collecting public decides to utilize their services and embrace their procedures.

Collectors should note that the opinions expressed in CBM Market Reports are solely those of the individual dealers and collectors who contribute them. Seasoned hobbyists are acutely aware that prices vary based on geographic location, time of year, and a number of other marketplace factors.

THE MATT SCHIFFMAN REPORT

Mile High's Magic Multiples

Mile Highs are the talk of the hobby and everyone seems to want to have at least one of the legendary books in their collection. But where can they be found? Most of the Mile High material, especially DC, went quickly at San Diego with one notable 18-book sale topping the $50,000 mark (in cash no less). A few continue to surface here and there and 3X to 6X Guide (and even higher for low Guide/top condition specimens) is still the norm for DC and Timely titles... with Quality, Fox, and certain pre-Code Crime and Horror books bringing slightly smaller multiples.

Golden Age

Black Terror and Fighting Yank continue to be in high demand, as do pulps. Demand is growing among comic book collectors for pulps, especially for extremely rare specimens in ultra high grade. Both DC/Timely Mile Highs and "gem-quality" pulps are usually picked off long before they ever make it to dealer lists.

Golden Age sales: Ace Comics #11 FR $310; Black Terror #1 FN $1200; Blue Beetle #1 GD- $600; Buzzy #1 VF $200; Calling All Girls #1 FN $75; Fantastic Comics #1 FR $400; Funny Stuff #1 FN $340; Golden Arrow #3 FN $200; Millie the Model #1 VF $480; Startling Comics #2 VF $500; Suspense Comics #4 GD $370; Shadow (pulp) Nov 15, 1936 VF $295.

Atom Age

Atom Age records continue to be set and interest continues to grow as collectors educate themselves about these great and often undervalued books. So many were not pictured in Gerber that the anticipation of the find keeps interest high. Pre-Code Westerns and Crime books are quietly making inroads on Horror and Good Girl, while demand for Fox books still outshines all of these. Even the strange and "oddball" Fox books are in high demand and are difficult (impossible?) to get above FN. Mile High "off brand" DC sales from this era are also strong and many who are looking to own just a few Mile Highs are looking to Atom Age DC Western, War, Teenage Humor, Funny Animal, Sci Fi/Mystery, and Romance because even at multiples these are still very affordable.

Atom Age sales: All Top #10 GD $45; Cinderella Love #7 VF $70; Cookie #1 FN/VF $165; Diary Loves #9 FN $65; Feature #104 NM $140; Harvey Hits #1 VF $350; Horrors #12 FN $110; King Comics #155 NM $110; Military Comics #43 VF/NM $400; Phantom Lady #13 FN $890; Planet #60 GD $45; Seven Seas #4 GD/GD+ $190; Sherry the Showgirl #1 VF/NM $225; Star Spangled Comics #122 FN+ $150.

Silver Age

Silver Age interest still abounds and prices have been reflecting this new found interest in the market. Marvel and DC still lead the way and anyone who keeps tabs on Dell sales on ebay will be pleasantly surprised.

Silver Age sales: Brave & Bold #34 FN $450; Showcase #4 GD $1,700; Flash #123 VF $1,200; Daredevil #1 VF/VF+ $1,150; Fantastic Four #2 FN $650, #5 VG $400; GI Combat #2 FN $110; Green Lantern #2 FN $180; Leave it to Binky #29 VF $70; Dobie Gillis #1 FN $90; Our Army at War #81 GD $220, #82 FN/VF $200, #83 FR $110; Nellie the Nurse #36 VF/NM $100.

Bronze Age

The Oakland collection demonstrated that collectors are more than willing to pay multiples of Guide for the scarcer books. Marvel Spotlight #2 in VF+ or better continues to be a very elusive book and continues to bring record prices. Marvel Westerns and horror reprints are very popular, and a growing number of collectors are branching out into Charlton & Gold Key. Keep a very close eye out for magazines, especially the horror, as they've been quickly disappearing.

Bronze Age sales: Adventure Comics #431 NM $32; Avengers #94 NM- $70; Bizarre Adventures #28 VF $20; Brave & Bold #100 VF $40; Marvel Spotlight #2 VF $110; Ringo Kid #1 NM $25; Tarzan #207 NM $22; Vampire Lives #1 VF/NM $25; Butch Cassidy #1 NM $11.

MARKET REPORTS

Continued from page 69

number... it is sellable.

I also wonder about this increased interest in '60s fanzines. Sure, many are limited in numbers (often 200 or less), but are they worth $25-75 an issue? And they continue to surface. Seems that this is one end of the hobby in which the majority of the print-runs were collected and saved. I love the old fanzines, for sure, but when push comes to shove, I'm happy with a photocopy of the information I desire for historical reference.

Recent Sales: Action #68 GD/VG $75, #106 VG+ $100; Adventure #75 FN $450, #79 FN/VF $600, #93 FN $275; All-Star #37 FN $400; All-Winners #5 VG/FN $300; Astonishing Tales #3 GD/VG $75; Captain America #15 FN/VF $900, # 30 FN/VF $550, #62 FN $300; Captain Marvel #30 FR $33, #33 VG $90, #44 FN/VF $140, #51 FN $75, #91 GD/VG $25; Green Lantern #1 PR $75; Marvel Mystery #19 FN/VF $600; Superman #30 VG+ $335, #45 GD/VG $85, #89 GD $40; Venus #13 FR/GD $40,VG $90.

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The back-issue comic market is holding its own and seems to be over the recent slump. Prior to the publication of the 1998 Overstreet, many collectors were taking a cautious position with their purchases. Since we have now had over six months with the new "price adjusted" Guide, dealers and collectors have settled into a more predictable agenda.

Comic shows have been very slow for us this year. We skipped San Diego for the first time since 1975. The last two years there were very light for us and with the increasing overhead of doing such a show, it just seemed more prudent to spend the time on the internet instead. This turned out to be a good decision, as internet sales are now accounting for a very large percentage of our back issue business. The net has definitely taken up the slack from conventions.

Golden Age: Good stuff is always hard to get, and good Golden Age titles are not in ample supply. Whenever we do come across

some, it generally just takes a phone call or two to move a good portion of a grouping. Westerns seem to be picking up a little, while Classics Illustrated remain soft. Mainstream titles continue to rule.

Golden Age Sales: All-Flash #20 VG $120; Amazing Mystery Funnies V3#1 GD $47; Batman #68 VG+ $170; Detective #62 GD $125; Miss Fury #6 VG $120; Superman #4 VG $900, #20 VG+ $340, #21 VG $233, #22 VF $640.

Silver Age: We have seen a renewed interest in lower grade Marvels since the drop in price, making this section of the market sellable again. With the additional incentive of a "20 percent off sale" Marvels can be a brisk part of our business. DC Silver Age is a bargain at current Guide levels, especially in low to mid grade. Acquisitions of pre-1962 material continues to be difficult

Silver Age Sales: Brave and Bold #28 GD/VG $575; Fantastic Four #48 FN+ $275; Green Lantern #2 GD/VG $75; Showcase #9 GD $500, #34 VG $170.

Bronze Age: The Bronze Age is where the speculators seem to be taking the most active part in the comic market. Although not a feeding frenzy yet, many titles are now selling briskly. All the early 1970's Atlas reprint horror titles are very active. The more "art" oriented (Wrightson, Adams, etc.) issues of such titles as House of Secrets and House of Mystery easily sell at or above Guide levels. Even off beat titles are seeing renewed interest (Monster of Frankenstein, Crypt of Shadows, War Is Hell).

Big Little Books: These traditionally have been on the soft side of the market, with certain exceptions. Although certainly not on fire, we have seen renewed interest in them this year. The Phantom, Shadow, Green Hornet, Buck Rogers, Flash Gordon and Lone Ranger are the most often requested titles.

Pulps: Pulp fever has reached epidemic proportions in our area! If you were to look at the recent Phillip Weiss auction (12-12-98), you would find something very interesting. There were only 38 lots of Golden and Silver Age comics as opposed to169 lots of pulp magazines! This is a total 180 degree reversal from a couple of years ago. In our store, pulps have out sold Golden and Silver Age comics in 1997 and 1998. The first major auction of comic books (Sotheby's 12-18-91) had no pulp lots. The recent Sotheby's auction (June 5th 1998) contained five lots of pulps, totaling 412 pieces, which sold for an astounding $36,799! The estimate range for these lots was $14,000 to $25,000. Four of the five lots exceeded their high estimate.

Not only is the pulp market strong, it is growing. Basically pulps ceased to exist around 1957, thus you have a very finite pool to buy from. There is collector cross over interest between the comic field and pulp field. Virtually the entire Silver Age DC empire was started by ex-pulp creators, (Murphy Anderson being a major contributor) and many pulp characters made it into comics (Doc Savage, The Shadow, Black Hood, Tarzan, Zorro).

In fact, the reverse also happened! You can find a brief appearance by the Human Torch in a pulp! There is a lot of great reading in pulps, beside the cover art which at times borders on magnificent. If you haven't already done so, you owe it to yourself to check out this genre.

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I specialize in non superhero Bronze Age comics that include teen humor, romance and kid oriented titles from DC and Marvel. Serious collectors of these titles know how scarce they are and are starting to pay top dollar for them in LOW grade. It is my experience that these Bronze Age titles almost never occur in high grade. Graded accurately, FN+ is the highest grade you are ever likely to see. (If you see a copy advertised in higher grade, I suggest it is likely mis-graded).

There are a few dominant trends in collecting Bronze Age comics right now. The past month has had more above Guide sales than the previous 11 months combined, possibly due to the anticipation of a markup in the new Guide. The bulk of Bronze Age comics are still very cheap, uncollected and actually very common but NOT above VF! Ebay Auctions on the internet now has a category created just for 1970's comics. Many books are graded VF+ or NM but 99% of them are not! Most collector/dealers do not grade at Overstreet standards and therefore are over grading.

Here are some of my most interesting sales of scarce books above Guide. All from customers on the internet. Please note that most of these sales are 2 x Guide (Overstreet #28) Adventure #381 VF $60 (1st Supergirl issue, series begins); Adv. of Jerry Lewis #118 FN- $ 6; Amazing World of DC Comics #17 VF $12; Binky #80 GD- $4, #80 VF- $24, #81 GD $4, #81 VF $24; Binky's Buddies #1 VG- $8, #1 VF $36, #2 GD+ $4, #3 PR $2, #4 VG+ $8; Chili #2 VF- $24, #8 VG+ $7; Date with Debbi #1 GD $7, #4 GD+ $4, #15 FN- $10, #17 FR $3; Debbi's Dates #2 GD $4, #3 VG- $7, #9 VG $7, #10 FN- $12; Girls Love #153 FN $9, #154 FN $9, #155 FN+ $12, #156 FN $9, #157 FN $9, #159 FN $9, #171 FN+ $12, #172 FN $9; Great Superman Book nn GD+ $15 (encyclopedia book by M. Fleisher).

Harvey #1 FN- $45, #2 FR $6, #4 VG- $18, #5 VG- $18; Leave it to Binky #61 VG $16, #62 GD+ $6, #64 GD $5; Li'L Kids #1 GD $10, #3 VG+ $15, #3 GD $7, #4 VG- $12, 1#2 VG- $12, 1#2 VG $12, #1 GD- $6; Li'l Pals #1 GD $8; Mad about Millie #4 GD $5, #5 GD $5; Millie the Model #118 VG $5, #198 GD $5, #205 FN+ $12, #205 VF $16; Millie the Model Queen Size #8 FR $4, #8 FN- $26.

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Bronze Age is my specialty and sales have been very good! Leading the pack are oversize comics of any type, 52/100 pagers, Treasuries and Digest size. Guide is now fairly accurate on the majority, but not all, of the 52 page/25¢ and 100 page comics. Many Treasuries and most Digest size comics bring over Guide. Starting to catch on are the DC Dollar comics, particularly the 80 and 68 page issues, along with the 52 page/50¢ cover price comics published in the mid to late 1970s.

I sell Silver Age also, but don't set a lot of records or move a bunch of major high grade keys. Low grade Silver Age (GD and VG) books are selling very well indeed and with my inventory, GD and VG books for $5 or less just don't last long. The more expensive items take a little longer, but at this point in time, I'd certainly rather be trying to sell a GD condition Green Lantern #1 than a VF condition copy of the same issue.

Bronze Age Sales: Batman Family #1, #6,

Continued from page 71

#9 all NM $12 each; David Cassidy #1 NM $50; DC 100 page Super Spectacular DC-4 FN+ $60, DC-6 FN $35, DC-8 FN $45, DC-9 VF $45, DC-10 NM $50; DC Special Series 1 VF $5; Haunted Love #2 NM (Charlton) $15; JLA #107 VF $6, #108 NM $10, #137 NM (Supes vs. Shazam) $12, #138 NM (Atom Strange cover by Adams) $8; Jungle Action #5 VF $15; Li'l Kids #1 NM $40 (It would have sold at 2x that price); Li'l Pals #1 VF $25; Marvel Premiere #1 NM/M $30; Marvel Spotlight #1 NM $25; Marvel Spotlight #2 NM- $125; Shanna the She-Devil #1 VF+ $12; Superman vs. Muhammed Ali NM $35; Superman vs. Shazam FN+ $15; Superman vs. Wonder Woman VF+ $25; Superman's Pal JO #134 NM $65; War Is Hell #1 NM $10; Young Love #107 NM $65.

Silver Age Sales: Green Lantern #1 VG $275, #63 GD $2, #64 VF $13, #66 FN $6; Journey Into Mystery #83 GD+ $350, #86 GD+ $24, #90 VF $65; Our Army at War #134 GD $3.50; Superman #205, #206, #208 FN $5 ea.; Tales of Suspense #46 FN + $40, #48 FN+ $75; Tales to Astonish #44 FN + $70; Turok #8 GD $12; X-Men #59, #60 FN $12 each.

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Retail sales from our warehouse store have slowed through the fall. We have our theories on the slow walk-in business but it is obvious that increasing activity on the internet is providing comic buyers with an alternative marketplace. We've started making sales on the net and our buyers are purchasing items that cover the whole range of comic genres.

As usual, convention sales offered us a larger audience to display our books, and brother, did we sell all types! Westerns, superheroes, war, good girl and horror. We recently did a couple of shows in California… SuperCon in Oakland, California and the brand new San Diego Vintage Con.

SuperCon: The two day show was well attended on Saturday, less so on Sunday. We brought a token selection of older comics to this show. Our group of treasury size comics sold surprisingly well at near-Overstreet prices.

Sales at SuperCon include: Famous First Editions: Rudolf #1 VF+ $125, Sensation #1 NM $15, Whiz #1 NM $15. Other sales included: Action #82 VG $100; Hulk #181 FN+ $150, #181 FN- $100; Manhunt #1 GD+ $45; More Fun #99 GD+ $85; More Trash from MAD #1 FN+ $35; Superman #69 VG $90; Superman Annual #2 GD $26.

San Diego Vintage Con was a new show put together and promoted by Jim Bilokovics and held at a venue that has showcased small cons in the past. Although attendance was light, we found sales to be amazingly brisk.

Golden Age: All-American Comics #93 PR $12; Batman #8 FR $150; Battle Ground #17 VG $12; Cosmo Cat #2 (IW Reprint) FN $4, #4 FN $9; Ding Dong Comics #3 FN $15; Ella Cinders #4 VG+ $8; Great Lover Romances #9 FN- $10; Heroic Comics #72 VG $18; Manhunt #11 VG $68; Mister Mystery #13 GD $50; Planet #57 GD $25; Real Life #52 FN- $33; Strange Suspense Stories #20 FR $15; Timmy the Timid Ghost #3 VG $42; Weird Terror #11 GD $26; Western Comics #80 FN/VF $43.

Silver Age: Avengers #51 VF- $28, #52 NM- $15; Fantastic Four #46 VF $50; Journey Into Mystery #81 GD $25; Tales of Suspense #13 GD $20; Tales to Astonish $14 FR $12.

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High number Cupples & Leon comic books from 1929 until after the beginning of the Great Depression are 5 to 10 times harder to locate in grade than say Mutt & Jeff #6-8 or Bringing Up Father #1-4. At a quarter a pop, the print runs towards the end of Cupple & Leon's comic book domination must have been miniscule. The public had little money to waste beyond food and shelter.

Platinum Sales: Mutt & Jeff #1 VG (Ball 1910) $200, #2 VG (Ball 1911) $200, #6 FN- (C&L 1919) $200; Bringing Up Father #6 VG (C&L 1922) $75, #9 VG+ (C&L 1925) $100, #18 VG+ (1930) $125; Adventures of Hawkshaw #1 VG (Saalfield 1917) $200; Henry #1 VF (David McKay 1935) $300.

Other Comic Books Sales: Action #101 FN+ $600, #163 VG+ $100; Adventure #103 VG+ $600; Alley Oop #10 (Standard) VF $100, #11 VF+ $80; All-Star #30 FN+ $400; All Western Winners #3 VG+ $85; Amazing Fantasy #10 & #11 VG/VG+ $75 ea.; Amazing Man #17 VG+ $175; Archie's Mechanics #1 VG- $100; Atom Age Combat #3 VG+ $60.

Batman #13 VG+ (Jerry Siegel cameo) $750, #39 FN+ $300, #100 VG/VG+ $300; Boy Commandos #24 VG (Superman satire cover) $45; Captain Marvel #81 FN+ $100; Captain Midnight #61 VF $80; Crime Reporter #2 VF+ $1000; Daredevil #1 (1964) FN+ $400 Donald Duck's Surprise Part FN+ 1948 (rare 16 pg giveaway by Walt Kelly for Frost Twins Ice Cream Bars) $900; Exciting #23 VG+ $80, #30 FN+ $150, #60 FN+ $150.

Flash #75 FN+ $300, #98 FN+ $400; Giant Addition #10 NM+ (Mighty Mouse) $200; GI Combat #45 VG $65; Little Lulu #18 VG+ $40; Lone Ranger 4C #136 FN+ $75; Lone Ranger's Tonto 4C #312 (#1) VF $75; Looney Tunes #21 VG $50; New Funnies #66 GD+ $45.

Pirate Comics #3 FN+ $50; Police #13 VG+ $250; Raggedy Ann & Andy #1 VG+ $100; Strange Worlds #1 VG+ (Atlas) $175; Sub-Mariner #20 VF+ $500; Superman #53 VG+ $600, #62 FN+ $200, #72 VG $90, #79 VG+ $125, #85 VG+ $100; Tales from the Tube #1 NM $50; Tarzan #17 FN+ $75; Tessie the Typist #11 VG $50; Thrilling #26 VG+ $100; #28 FN+ $100; T-Man #6 VG/VG+ $60; Underworld Crime #7 VG $75; Vacation Parade #1 VG+ $200; Wonder Woman #19 FN+ $300; World War III #2 VG+ $125.

Undergrounds Sales: Wonder Warthog #1 (1967 magazine) $100; Zap #1 VF (Plymell edition) $600 (one of the most important comic books ever published); Yarrowstalks #2 VG (rare Crumb tabloid) $200; Funny Animals #1 FN+ $75 (1973 first appearance of Spiegelman's Pulitzer Prize winning Maus; also contains scarce Crumb story).

Sales are good since Bob O lowered prices. Granted, some of the above sold for over Guide, but they reflect where the market is headed. Good stuff will always turn over.

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The Platinum Age of comic books (1895-1933) occurred because people loved the Sunday comics and wanted to have permanent collections for their enjoyment. Virtually all of the comic books from this period contained

material reprinted from the Sunday pages. Today it is clear that these early American comic books are historically significant, contain great art, and are extremely rare. It is also interesting to note that following the merchandising success of Palmer Cox with The Brownies and R. F. Outcault with the Yellow Kid and subsequently Buster Brown, there are lots of great collectibles to look for from this period besides just the comic books, including sheet music, figures, pinbacks, postcards, and a variety of other objects.

Although once spurned by libraries and museums, today the American comic in all of its forms is revered throughout the world as one of the few uniquely American contributions to global culture. Make no mistake about it, this material is genuinely rare! And because of the law of supply and demand, it is also resonably priced, because there are so few collectors.

As more and more people realize that these early comic books, published in a variety of shapes and forms, represent the true beginnings of the comic book as it has evolved today, demand will increase. I have seen significant price increases in this field in the last five years, but this is still an emerging field just starting to attract the attention of new collectors. As such, you can still find a bonafide rarity by a great artist and usually only spend a few hundred dollars. Contrast this with a comparable Golden Age comic book, and you can see that the investment potential is unlimited. Imagine owning a 10" x 17" comic book by Outcault, Opper, Dirks, McKay, Swinnerton, or one of the other founding artists of the comic book and realizing that it was 100 years old and that only a handful still existed!

Reported Sales: Yellow Kid ten pin set, MT, $5000; Yellow Kid newspaper poster, VF $1250; Pore Li'l Mose sheet music VG $250; Buster Brown and His Antics oblong book VG $150; Yellow Kid Songster sheet music VF $1000.

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CBM is not responsible for incorrect addresses, phone numbers, & prices printed in Market Reports/MarketWatch.

Continued from page 9

ing and the "S" emblem are Shuster's. The cape, however, is Boring's as he was the only one who put that circle of empty space behind Superman's neck.

Action #26 is also laid out by Shuster. Note the faces on the two hoods being carried by Superman. The "S" emblem is Boring's however and it appears to be his inks.

Action #27 may be penciled by Boring but the inks and finishes are by Paul Cassidy, who was Shuster's primary ghost at the time. The "S" symbol design is the one Cassidy was using during this period.

Action #28 is purely the work of Paul who loved to depict Superman flying in this position. Action #29 is probably by Boring although Cassidy may also be involved.

Actions #30-32 are not by Boring or Ray. My guess is that they were laid out by Joe Shuster, penciled by Leo Nowak and inked by John Sikela. They are definitely the work of the Shuster shop artists as they strongly resemble the interior work in these issues. Action #33 is puzzling, but I think Nowak inked it. One thing is clear however, these eight covers could in no way be the work of one artist. Boring did not spend a lot of time working on the Superman comic book stories, concentrating on the newspaper strip up until the late '40s when Win Mortimer took it over. The earliest definitive Boring cover I can find on Action Comics is #51 in August 1942.

Bob Hughes, via E-mail

Bonjour

As I read CBM #60, I was very surprised to see the French comics from the 1960s on the inside back cover. I can add a little info to Pat Kochanek's contribution.

The title Aventures Fiction (not Adventures Fiction, sorry) was published by les Editions Artima. Artima was founded by Emile Keirsbilk, in Tourcoing, in the North of France, in 1943, during the German occupation. In the early 1950s, Artima published 20, 36-page black and white comic books sized with front and back color covers. These publications were very popular at the end of the decade. Every kind was represented: action (Dynamic...), jungle stories (Tarou, Ardan...), war stories (Vigor), Western stories (Aventures Film, Audax...) and science-fiction stories.

Artima took his science-fiction stories from French artist, Spanish studio and, since 1956, from U.S. (more exactly, DC materials).

The most successful SF title was also the first: Meteor (AKA Meteor), published in May 1953. Meteor told the interplanetary adventures of Doctor Spencer and his two pals, Sam Spade and Texas. The brothers Raoul and Robert Giordan illustrated, all in length, the stories written by Robert Lortac. Meteor was the longest running Artima comics, stopped in a digest-size in 1977 with 206 issues. Meteor contains no U.S. material (with very few exceptions).

Other Artima comics manufactured were:

• Atome Kid: not a superhero born from the Atomic power of the '50s but a Buck Rogers/ Bulletman mixed hero. This popular hero (we are still wondering why?) was drawn by "Bayo" (AKA Braulio Rodriguez) and other Spanish artists. The title began in November 1956 and stopped with his 35th issue in September 1959. Atome Kidd's stories continued in the title Cosmos and in a black and white digest-size in 1970. No U.S. material.

• Cosmos (11/1956-12/1961): 62 issues with European materials: Ray Comet (spaceship pilot) and Atome Kid. Interesting, the painting SF covers of the last year. The title was used again in 1967 for an Aredit digest-size. No U.S. material.

• Spoutnik (12/1957-11/1960): 34 issues (the first eight reprints of the first Meteor stories) with Pilote Tempete by J. J. Sprenger and others Spanish stories. The last two years' covers were paintings. Spoutnik was merging with Meteor. No U.S. material.

• Monde Futur (AKA Future World), began in February 1959 and published minor Spanish SF stories by Boixar and other artists. It was ceased in September 1960 with his 20th issue.

The title was used in May 1971 for thirteen issues published, in a comic size, stories of Adam Strange and Atomic Knights. The U.S. Connection

Artima, also, edited digest-size of 66 black and white pages, front and back color covers, since 1956. This size was very popular in France.

The first Artima digest-size was also the successful: Big Boy, published on the stand on October 1956. With his 46th issue (July 1960), Big Boy became Big Boss. It ceased in July 1962 (#70). Big Boy/Big Boss introduced in France DC Silver Age material. The first stories reprinted adventures from 1954-56 like Tomahawk comics by Fred Ray or more modern adventures. Quickly, the adventure stories turn to SF stories by Kirby, Win Mortimer...

Big Boy #19 (April 1958-with a SF Kirby cover) introduced the first Silver Age superheroes from Adventure Comics: John Jones (AKA J'onn J'onzz), les Francs-Archers (AKA Green Arrow and Speedy) and Oceo Rex (Aquaman). After, Big Boss published the first SA stories of Black Hawks (12/1961), Green Lantern (2/1962-origin from Showcase) and Atom (4/1972-origin from Showcase.)

Because of his 70 issues, Big Boy remains one of the hardest Artima's digest-size to complete (one issue missed me I have only got it in the unsold bookbinding form).

A second Big Boss series began in June 1970. It contained the first Big Boy reprints and ceased with his 59th and final issue in February 1983.

• Flash: On the stand on April 1959, this title published Spanish stories of cameramen and reporters. With his 33rd issue (December 1961), the only and one S. A. stories of Flash by Carmine Infantino began to be published side by side with Lois Lane.

Because of the French Comics Code (since 1949 in France), the mystery men were forbidden. That explains why the mask of our speedracer was taken off. At last, Flash is also interesting because many of the covers were paintings (imagine in 1962 painted covers with Flash... beautiful!).

Flash ceased in October 1963 (#54). With Big Boy, this title was a collection very difficult to complete, if not the more difficult of Artima's title-and only the 22nd last issues were interesting.

A second Flash collection-with Flash stories-began in May 1970 in comic size (colors) and in a digest-size (black and white). This second ceased with his 59th issue in June 1983.

In the '60s, Artima exploited U.S. material also in the Meteor-like size comics. These other titles were:

• Sideral: On the stand February 1958 to July 1962 (51 issues). At first, a comic size, it took the rare pocket-size with his 28th issue (July 1960). The two other titles, Aventures Fiction and Bat-Man merged with Sideral in November 1960 (Sideral #32). Sideral published SF stories from Mystery In Space and since #21 (December 1959) began the Adam Strange stories from 1959-61 Mystery In Space.

A second Sideral began in 1968. This pocket-size adapted in comic form some stories from French collection: Anticipation (digest-size of SF tales written in the Pulps style).

• Aventures Fiction (AKA Adventures Fiction): Began in March 1958 and stopped in September 1960 (29 issues). This title contains material from Tales of the Unexpected, Strange

Adventures, Mystery In Space... it merged with Sideral in November 1960.

A second black and white digest-size Aventures Fiction began in July 1966 to February 1978 (57 issues). It contains DC material like the Challengers of the Unknown, Blackhawks, Metamorpho, Hawkman and Marvel material (Sub-Mariner, Captain America, Giant-Man)...

• Bat-Man: despite his name, this title has no relationship with the DC Caped Crusader. This comic size title printed SF stories from DC material. It began in February 1960 and ceased in September 1960 with only eight issues. It merged with Aventures Fiction in Sideral in pocket-size in November 1960.

Most of these titles were stopped in 1962. That year, Artima was bought by les Presses de la Cite and became Aredit.

After the popular comic size of the '50s, Aredit began in 1966 pocket-size editions of 160 b&w pages: The Comics Pocket. The top of this collection were Aventures Fiction (7/1966-2/1978: 57 numbers), Eclipso (4/1968-2/1983: 84 numbers), Estranges Aventures (7/1966-6/83: 78 numbers), and Spectre (4/1967-1/1968: 4 numbers). These titles translated stories from DC Inc. material (Challengers, Eclipso, Hawkman, Black Canary, Doctor Fate, Atom, Doom Patrol, Metal Men, Metamorpho, Deadman, Green Lantern...) and since 1971, Marvel material (Doctor Strange, Hulk, Thor, Captain America, Avengers, Sub-Mariner, Man-Thing, Ant-Man, Eternals, Ka-Zar...) and a little material from Charlton (Question) and Tower (Thunder Agents).

In 1970, Aredit began another comic size collection, 36 pages all in color (not for a dime!)... Pop Magazine/Éclair Comics. The most interesting were Aquaman, Atom, Flash, Monde Futur (containing Adam Strange and Atomic Knights), Green Lantern and Shazam (Captain Marvel). Some were ceased in 1971, the others became pocket-size.

The complexity and mixing of Artima/Aredit's titles and stories is a massive research headache. In France, some of the real specialists in this area include Thierry Allie, Francis St. Martin, and the "incredible" Tristan Lapoussiere who tried to identify every non-Marvel story published in France (he also published a 400 pages study on Steve Ditko).

My Artima collection began in 1956. I possess about 95% of these superheroes comics and hope this little summary will help you. Thanks for CBM. I like it very much.

Eric Vignolles, France

X-Men, Schmecks-men

X-Men, Schmecks-men. It was your Doom Patrol and Metal Men articles that made the November issue a standout. As a long-time DC fan/collector (started in '62, still going strong), it's CBM's continuing excellent coverage of DC's Golden and Silver Age series and characters that distinguishes it as the premiere comics collecting mag on the market today.

Especially impressive were the color cover repros, including the entire Doom Patrol run! Bless you!

Also enjoyed the interview with Bill Schelly and the fanzines article. It was through fanzines, primarily RBCC and Alter Ego, that my friends and I became aware of the rich Golden Age history we had missed out on by being born a few years too late. CBM is doing a terrific job of filling this void for current readers, and I'd like to make my pitch now for future articles featuring the Challengers of the Unknown, the Martian Manhunter, Plastic Man, Johnny Quick, Superboy, and the individual JSA members.

Bill Drummond, Arizona

I curse you

Just wanted to drop you a line about how thrilled I was to read the dual fanzine interview/articles in CBM #64. As a reader of CBM since issue #2 I think that those articles are thus far my all-time favorites. As much as I love to read about the history of the comic book medium and the players and characters that fall within it, it is the fandom that supports the medium and its rich history that interests me the most. Unfortunately, the articles are a double-edged sword. Now, I feel, it will be harder to find old fanzines at an affordable price. One of the things that has made collecting fanzines so interesting is the lack of a reference or even a price guide. This makes collecting them more of a cooperative effort on the part of the buyer and seller (or traders, for that matter), it seems, because pricing is so abstract. I sense that after the publication of the article some kind of price guide project will be upon us in the near future, and some of the blame will probably be placed on CBM #64. Collecting fanzines is hard enough for those of us not around in their heyday, so that we must rely on the secondary marketplace in order to obtain them. I suspect that many who weren't (or were only mildly) aware of them have had their interests piqued and now it will be much more competitive for what is already a scarce enough item. I thank you for the history, but I curse you for the spotlight you've shed on my favorite thing to collect. By the way, anybody have a spare Graphic Story Magazine #12?

Thanks again Mr. C. for publishing the greatest periodical devoted to comics probably in the history of the comic book. Sincerely,

Jeffrey A. Goodman, via E-mail

Luthor's Planet Ploy

Regarding Scott MacKenzie's letter in CBM #64, I have a Superman item that sounds identical to his Batgirl premium in all but the size. It's titled Luthor's Planet Ploy, and the title and all word balloons are in both French and English. The back cover features a Super-Heroes ViewMaster offer to the kid who sends in three box tops from Post cereals. The front cover carries a 1981 copyright but the Viewmaster offer on the back expires in October 1983. As to the size difference, my book measures 3 x 6 ¾", not the 2 x 8 ½" that Scott mentions.

I've been buying CBM since about issue #15 and enjoy each issue immensely. Keep up the great work.

PS. Why don't you list your E-mail address in the letters column to make it easier for on-line letter writers?

Jim Walls, via E-mail

cbm@gemstonepub.com

Robin Snyder

In response to a letter from Jim Brocius in CBM #64, Steve Ditko's article on his creating Spider-Man's costume was published in Robin Snyder's newsletter, The Comics, in the May 1990 issue (Vol. 1, No. 5). It is entitled "An Insider's part of Comics History Jack Kirby's Spider-Man" and is quite forthright and informative. Perhaps you can get permission from Robin to reprint all or a portion of it. Robin has published quite a bit of Ditko's more personal work, as well as putting together a fine newsletter with letters, articles and information from many greats of the comics field, including names such as Alex Toth, Robert Kanigher and Craig Flessel. If anyone would like to contact him for information his address is: Robin Snyder, 2284 Yew Street Rd., Bellingham, WA 98226-8899 or you can E-mail him at rscomics@aol.com. Anyone who is interested in the vast history of comics won't be disappointed.

I hope Ditko does consent to answer more questions someday. I've been trying to get some answers from him myself, including the somewhat confusing history of Spider-Man. Perhaps, someday, we'll get the rest of the story.

A mystery writer/fan, via E-mail

We'd like you to write for us!

Contact the CBM Editorial Department 619•437•1996

CBM Special Edition

Was wondering how you were going to offer the Special advertised in the latest Previews to your regular subscribers? Thanks!

Tom Hamilton, via E-mail

Please see next letter...

Gerber White Space Stickers

I am a subscriber to CBM. The latest Previews offers a CBM Special Edition with three variant covers. (1) Will subscribers be receiving one as part of their sub, or is it necessary that one be ordered through Previews? (2) Is there any way, other than buying all three variants, to obtain the Gerber book inserts ("White space stickers") in their entirety?

Thomas H. Miller, via E-mail

(1) Because the Special Edition contains only reprints, subscribers will not receive it as part of their sub. If you would like to get one, it will be necessary to order one from your local shop via Previews. I didn't want to force reprint material on regular subscribers. (2) All three variants are identical, except for the cover, so one copy will be sufficient to get the Gerber book stickers.

On-line sales

Picked up the new CBM and I am looking forward to your expanded Market Report section. I find it interesting that you've included more and more reports of on-line sales recently. On-line auction sites like ebay (which had a booth at San Diego) are changing the face of the hobby. I'd be interested to hear what prominent dealers and collectors think the impact of on-line selling has been/will be. I have both sold and bought books on-line and it's generally been a good experience... no better or worse than traditional mail order. On the plus side, it makes it easier to sell books, especially those that have a narrower fan base (like Disney and Dell), directly to most interested collectors, no matter their location. On the negative side, the rise of on-line selling could result in a decline in conventions and stores, which would be a shame—there's nothing like holding a book in your handing and shooting the breeze with fellow addicts.

I've spoken to several dealer friends about this recently. One said he was going to close his store and sell exclusively on the net—why pay rent, he said, when the majority of his sales are on-line? Another dealer friend said he's concerned that it will become increasingly difficult for him to restock back issues as collectors stop selling their books to dealers in favor of selling them directly on the internet. I agree—from the collector's standpoint, why take 50% of Guide when you can get 95% on the net? I think this is an interesting new wrinkle to the hobby whose implications are just starting to be felt, and I'm curious as to how others feel.

Chris Gage, via E-mail

Ray Milland is Prof. Xavier?

Thanks for another great issue (CBM #64). The X-Men and Doom Patrol were both favorites of mine in my youth, and it was nice to read about and be reminded of the similarities the two book shared... all those love triangles....

Has anyone ever dug for more information on the connection between the X-Men and the 1963 Ray Milland film X-The Man With X-Ray Eyes? It features Milland as Dr. Xavier, whose experiments with radioactive x-factors grant him x-ray vision. Alas, the power is beyond his control and he is forced to flee the life he knows. He joins a traveling sideshow as "Mentallo-able to see into the hearts of men." Could a sham psychic named Xavier in a movie have been the inspiration for the wheelchair-bound professor we know so well? And what about this Mentallo bit?

Who's got the skinny on this?

I had actually written an article on the subject, also touching on the similarities between the Doom Patrol and the X-Men. Didn't even make the Nero Wolfe tie-in on my own, though, so I'm kinda glad I held out.

Next time, however...

Anyway, I thoroughly enjoyed issue #64, and look forward to the next.

Craig Smith, California

Brilliant idea!

Thought I'd take this opportunity to write and tell you how much I enjoyed CBM #63 & 64. The Superman tribute issue presented a unique perspective on the 60-year history of the Man of Steel. For me the highlight of the issue was Arlen Schumer's historical art chronicle. A brilliant idea, allowing us to span 60 years of greatness in 12 pages. Is there any possibility that this unique approach could be used in subsequent issues to examine other great comic book heroes? How about Captain America, The Flash, Green Lantern, Daredevil, or my personal favourite

Spider-Man. Arlen mentioned in his article that he has already produced The Graphic History of Batman. I'll bet the readers of CBM would love to see this.

CBM #64's coverage of Marvel's X-Men and DC's Doom Patrol and Metal Men was an entertaining examination of the three theme related Silver Age greats. The color gallery for this issue was outstanding. Makes me wish I could afford to collect these books.

Now to a different train of thought. I was dismayed when I read Alan Glick's letter in CBM #61, which announced that Ernie Gerber's Photo-Journal #5 (DC—Silver & early Bronze) is being postponed. Great Caesar's Ghost, what a disaster. This news must have disappointed thousands of collectors. This photo-journal is vital to collectors of this era.

Thanks again for the great magazine and best wishes to yourself and your staff for the holidays.

John R. Stuart, via E-mail

Thanks for writing, John. I'm looking forward to your upcoming Bronze Age articles in the the near future! And yes, Arlen's work on the Caped Crusader is scheduled for our Batman tribute issue… CBM #70!

DC Humor & Mort Drucker

Thanks to Tony Gleeson (who needs to get cracking on another CBM article to match his stellar piece on the Blackhawks a while back) for his comments in CBM #64 on my recent Dobie Gillis article. In particular, Tony wrote, "It is my understanding that Mort Drucker contributed to a number of DC's humor books, notably Bob Hope (and probably at least a few Dobies)."

Tony is quite right about Bob Hope; Drucker drew a number of entire issues of Ol' Slopenose, including covers, although you won't find this information anywhere in the Overstreet Price Guide (for which DC humor enthusiasts such as me are quite grateful, since it keeps the prices reasonable). I've also found at least one issue of Jerry Lewis that looks like Drucker pencils as well. However, Bob Oksner drew all 26 issues of Dobie Gillis, although Drucker pinch-hit on a few covers.

Curiously, the Guide includes a notation that Dobie Gillis #20 includes Drucker art, despite the fact that Drucker neither drew the cover nor the Dobie Gillis story. Drucker's contribution in that issue was actually a gag page titled "Little Bits." What makes Overstreet's notation so curious to me is that Drucker was contributing these gag pages for most of the run of the title, but the Guide only cites that one example.

A couple of minor corrections to your thoroughly enjoyable 64th issue (but then, I'm a sucker for any issue that's heavy on DC characters): First, the Metal Men were not victims of the DC implosion, as Murray Ward suggested. Their last issue (# 56) came out a good six months before the implosion hit.

And second, at the risk of piling on as surely others have already written in to point this out, I seriously doubt that the name Madame Rouge (from the Doom Patrol) has ANYTHING to do with the song "Love Potion #9," as Douglas Kelly suggests, since the name of the gypsy with the gold-capped tooth was Madame Ruth, not Rouge. Many thanks, though, for his mini-profile of Arnold Drake, as versatile a comics writer as the genre has ever seen. Any chance of seeing a full-length interview with Drake sometime soon? Best,

Dave Blanchard, via E-mail

Doug Kelly is completely innocent of the Madame Rouge-Madame Ruth connection… it was all my idea… sorry. As for the Murray Ward's suggestion that Metal Men were victims of the DC implosion, I still thinks it's a possibility. Initially a few titles were stopped several months before the majority of them ceased publication "in mass" so to speak. I still consider them part of the "implosion." But hey, because of the time separation your exclusion of the title is logical too. I'd be interested in hearing from other DC fans regarding this topic. Was the Metal Men title a victim of the implosion… or canceled previous to it?

Robbie the robot… dog!

Just got the November issue, and I'm very pleased to see my feature on The Doom Patrol. Super job on the design, Lisa, and having the full run of DP covers in the color section is an unexpected bonus. Talk about a theme issue: Michelle Nolan's piece on the first Robotman is an eye-opener. (Robbie the Robot Dog? Leave off the word 'dog,' and I think we've got us a neat little trail leading straight to a forbidden planet.)

I hope I can make one correction (or addition). Somewhere along the way, my acknowledgements were left off the end of the article. Please let me thank Murray Ward for his help, and for his publishing the excellent and indispensable Official Doom Patrol Index; Lou Mougin, for his willingness to share information; and Arnold Drake for… well, you know. Keep up the good work.

Doug Kelly, via E-mail

Where's Brave & Bold #65?

Really enjoyed CBM #64 featuring the "misfit superhero" teams, especially the article on the Doom Patrol by Douglas Kelly. I'm a big DP fan and was wondering when you'd eventually come up with something on them. It's great that you managed to include every issue in your beautiful cover gallery too, but it's a shame that you couldn't squeeze in Brave & Bold #65 where they team up with the Flash (I also think the reprint issues of DP from the seventies could have been omitted, but I guess that would mean too much white space). Like a lot of your readers, I'm very partial to the comics and artists of the old days. I had the pleasure of meeting Murphy Anderson recently at a local convention (Hi Murphy!) and hope to see more of the old guard up here in Canada. On that same note, I'm kind of curious as to what happened to Bruno Premiani since the end of DP in '68. Did he stop illustrating comics and return to Argentina or what? You've got a terrific magazine. Keep up the good work.

Stephen Tham, via E-mail

My thanks to everyone who wrote in this time, I look forward to hearing comments and suggestions from CBM readers all over the world. You're all part of the "CBM family" now, and your opinion counts! I hope you'll write or FAX soon! Please note that CBM reserves the right to edit letters selected for publication for length and/or content. If you'd care to write, send communications to:

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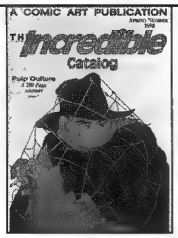
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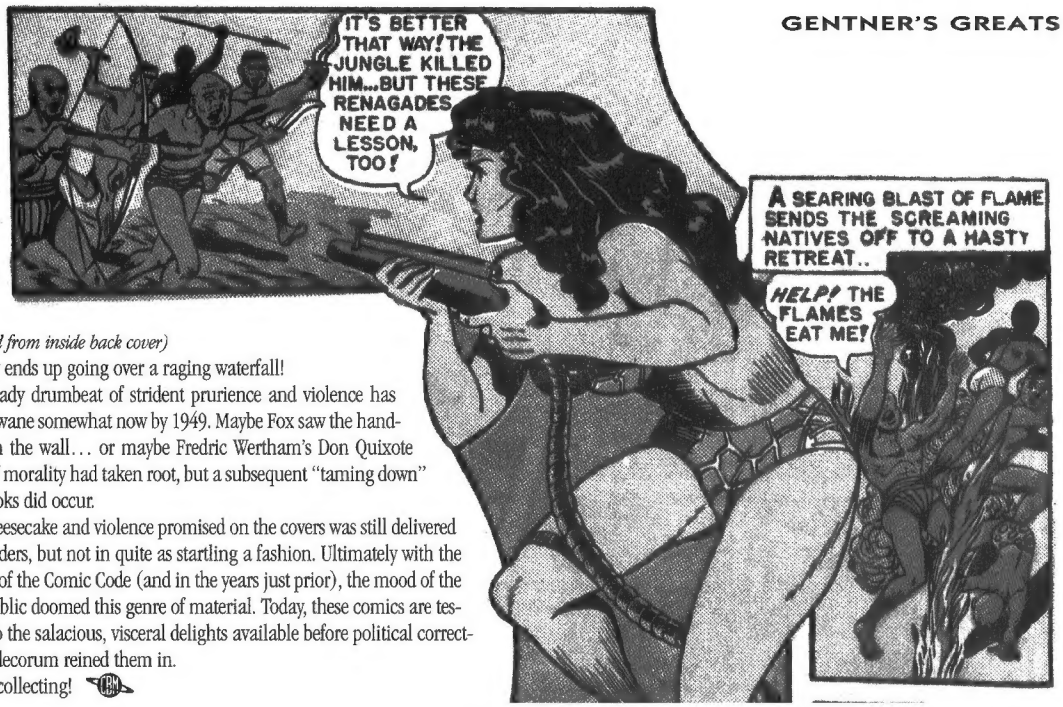

IT'S BETTER THAT WAY! THE JUNGLE KILLED HIM...BUT THESE RENAGADES NEED A LESSON, TOO!
A SEARING BLAST OF FLAME SENDS THE SCREAMING NATIVES OFF TO A HASTY RETREAT..
HELP! THE FLAMES EAT ME!

(Continued from inside back cover)

eventually ends up going over a raging waterfall!

The steady drumbeat of strident prurience and violence has started to wane somewhat now by 1949. Maybe Fox saw the handwriting on the wall... or maybe Fredric Wertham's Don Quixote crusade of morality had taken root, but a subsequent "taming down" in Fox books did occur.

The cheesecake and violence promised on the covers was still delivered to Fox readers, but not in quite as startling a fashion. Ultimately with the inception of the Comic Code (and in the years just prior), the mood of the buying public doomed this genre of material. Today, these comics are testaments to the salacious, visceral delights available before political correctness and decorum reined them in.

Happy collecting!

NOLAN'S NOTEBOOK

Continued from page 15

and several interior features until the last two issues, but he went back to more orthodox sports topics, along with occasional appearances of the Eisner-ish baseball character Slewfoot Jones beginning in Vol. 4 #1 (May-June 1947). My guess is that *True Sport Picture Stories* succeeded simply because it was unique at the time and no one else invaded the market. After Street & Smith abruptly pulled out of the comic book and pulp magazine business in 1949, Fawcett stepped into the sports breech with a series of successful celebrity-based comics.

It has always amazed me that *True Sport Picture Stories* succeeded, however, since the majority of the art was so downright old-fashioned looking. I also suspect that's why these books are not highly sought-after today. They are, however, a lot of fun, and I recommend them if you're looking for something different. (If anybody knows where a #18 resides, let me know because I still need it!)

With regard to Fiction House's *Movie Comics*, this short-lived title and the accompanying four-issue run of *Toyland* (a children's title which is truly difficult to find), represented the company's effort to break out of its "Big Six" mold of the mid-1940s. That was the period when pulp kingpin Fiction House published the flamboyant, pulp-inspired, long-running *Planet, Fight, Wings, Rangers, Jungle* and *Jumbo comics*.

Fiction House, which has wonderful, mouth-watering house ads on the inside front covers, featured the "Big Six of the Comics" in its house ad in *Movie Comics* #1 (December 1946). By *Movie Comics* #2 (February 1947) and #3 (June 1947), the company was plugging the "Super Seven" including *Movie Comics*. Finally, by the undated *Movie Comics* #4 (1947), it had become the "Great Eight." The inside front cover of #4, with the wildly out-of-place *Toyland Comics,* is truly one of the all-time bizarre house ads in comic history.

Fiction House's version of *Movie Comics* should have succeeded, since there was no competition yet from the wonderful Fawcett and Dell film adaptations that were soon to begin. However, Fiction House's handsomely done attempt did not sell, even though the publishers tried putting three different genres on four fine covers by Bob Lubbers—crime (with "Big Town" on #1 and "White Tie and Tails" on #2), teen comedy (with "Love Laughs at Andy Hardy" on #3) and exotic adventure (with "Slave Girl" on #4).

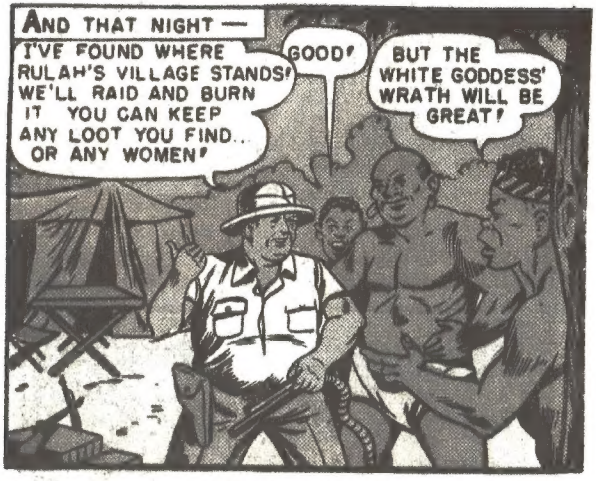
However, those four films, along with the other movies featured in the four issues such as Red Skelton's "Merton of the Movies" in #4, were aimed more at adults than youngsters. So I suspect that's why the comic didn't sell. Fawcett and Dell, of course, usually did it right with adaptations of movies that appealed primarily to kids.

DC encountered the same problem with its four-issue run of *Feature Films* in 1950, putting John Payne's "Captain China" and "The Eagle and the Hawk" on #1 and 3; Bing Crosby's "Riding High" on #2 and Bob Hope's "Fancy Pants" on #4. Those were all films largely intended for adults.

For some collectors, the highlight of *Movie Comics* is Matt Baker's sexy strip "Mitzi of the Movies" in #2-4 (Fran Hopper nicely drew Mitzi in #1). That's another reason I think *Movie Comics* probably was intended for an older audience, but just failed to sell. I also think youngsters were looking for things in comics that they couldn't find at the movies.

Thanks in part to the Baker strip and in part to collectors of Americana, *Movie Comics* sells just fine now. The four issues in Good condition are valued at a combined $157 in *Overstreet*.

Until next issue, may the mysteries of comic books continue to enchant us all.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GOOD!
BUT THE WHITE GODDESS' WRATH WILL BE GREAT!

by
Stephen H.
Gentner

LEWD & CRUDE...
hence their great charm!

I finally acquired a couple of Fox books in grade that I've been searching for years for! The first is *All Top* #10, March 1948, and the other is *Jo Jo "Congo King,"* #25, March 1949. Nowadays covers so often sell books, that when you get really outrageous interior art it's a bonus. *CBM* readers are already familiar with cheesecake and good-girl artists Matt Baker and Jack Kamen, (among others). These greats were sometimes part of the Fox Feature Publications bullpen, run by the infamous Victor Fox. He and his company delivered violence, brutality, bondage, and sexually enticing material... flat-out... each month. He pushed the limits of what could (or should) be in a comic book, a medium ostensibly for kids and young adults.

To the uninitiated, Victor Fox was regarded by Dr. Fredric Wertham as one of the, if not THE most foul "seducers of innocents" in the industry at that time. The period 1946-1949 was the high water mark for Fox's sordid, racy, stereotypical, and salacious material—packed and wrapped for your revulsion each month a dime at a time!

All Top #10 contains the anthology line-up of Rulah, Jo Jo, Blue Beetle, and the Phantom Lady. This particular issue's cover has a torture/near decapitation theme going. But inside, the Rulah story regales us with a guy who gets his power and kicks by flame-throwing animals and people in the jungle. To demonstrate the device to his lackeys, he turns the flame-thrower on a tree full of cuddly monkeys! Pictured are many monkeys, their fur and flesh on fire... screaming and dying horribly while falling out of the trees! That done, he stakes out some luscious jungle babe on x-stakes to lure and bring Rulah to his will. The Jungle Goddess thwarts him, and chases the creep into the waiting coils of a python. With him gone (and being the fair and decent heroine she is and mindful of the terrible lessons she has wit-

nessed from this white barbarian), she turns the flame-thrower on the native henchmen!! Whew!

The Jo Jo installment has "Tawnee," Jo Jo's squeeze, taking a spear through the shoulder from an avaricious lady named 'Ooga'! Ooga's got a pretty nice put-together, and she schemes to rid the jungle of Jo Jo! A giant-ape "test of strength" ritual meant to kill Jo Jo backfires, and Ooga gets wrung out like a wet washcloth by ape boy! Ooga gets bent and twisted into several provocative headlight, thigh-splaying poses before her demise. Jo Jo vanquishes Mr. Ape with his trusty knife, and his sector of Jungle Land is safe for another 30 days.

Blue Beetle risks his life and limb breaking up a counterfeiting ring (ho-hum!), and then... Phantom Lady "copes with the cleverest of them all... The Television Spies!"

Sandra Knight (alias Phantom Lady) is introduced to a friend of her Senator father, "Mr. Ringo." Ringo has a deformed foot, and looks like an evil Monk Mayfair. Secret A-Bomb plans are swiped by Ringo, and are inadvertently revealed on the television show Sandra's hunky boyfriend Don is putting together. Sandra flips her hips and almost shows off her "trademark" as she turns into Phantom Lady. Ringo is making good his escape, but Sandra has pluck, a fast car, and the writers on her side!

"HOLY MOLEY!!—it's Phantom Lady, and she's brought her breasts with her!! Drive Like Hell!" Baring the requisite amount of cleavage, Phantom Lady blinds the driver with her black-ray and he slams head-on into a tree! Yessir, *All Top* delivered the spice and smash with this issue.

As for *Jo Jo* #25, I had never been able to find a copy and I now believe it is the hardest issue in the run to obtain. Putting the meat of the run together (including many dupes) was a lot easier than locating #25. The issue is also, naturally, my favorite cover of the run. I put it right up there with *Seven Seas* #6, *Phantom Lady* #17 and 23, and *Crime Reporter* #2, among others.

The cover of *Jo Jo* #25 depicts Tawnee, Jo Jo's jungle paramour, tied to a tree. Her arms above her head, her bangs are cut so she is a dead ringer for Bettie Page. The obvious similarity to Ms. Page is understandable, as Baker and the boys sometimes used cheesecake magazines as templates of titillation for their more provocative panels. In March of 1949, Bettie's star was definitely in ascension, and with today's Rocketeer-Dave Stevens homages et al proliferating like mad, it's nice to see something in the actual time period that was appreciative of her charms.

Back to Tawnee—her bikini struggling to restrain God's bottles and her fanny planted on tinder, Jo Jo uses a bull-whip to thwart Voodoo Witch doctor boy from torching Tawnee. Bondage, headlights, violence, stereotyped natives... this cover has all the outrageous and politically incorrect elements that make Fox books so collectible.

The interior to *Jo Jo* #25 isn't quite as spectacular or onerous as *All Top* #10. We are treated to stories of jungle despots and their dusky "Brute Squad" henchmen terrorizing the local fauna. In one sequence, there is a floating island retreat used for rituals and terror which *(Continued on page 79)*

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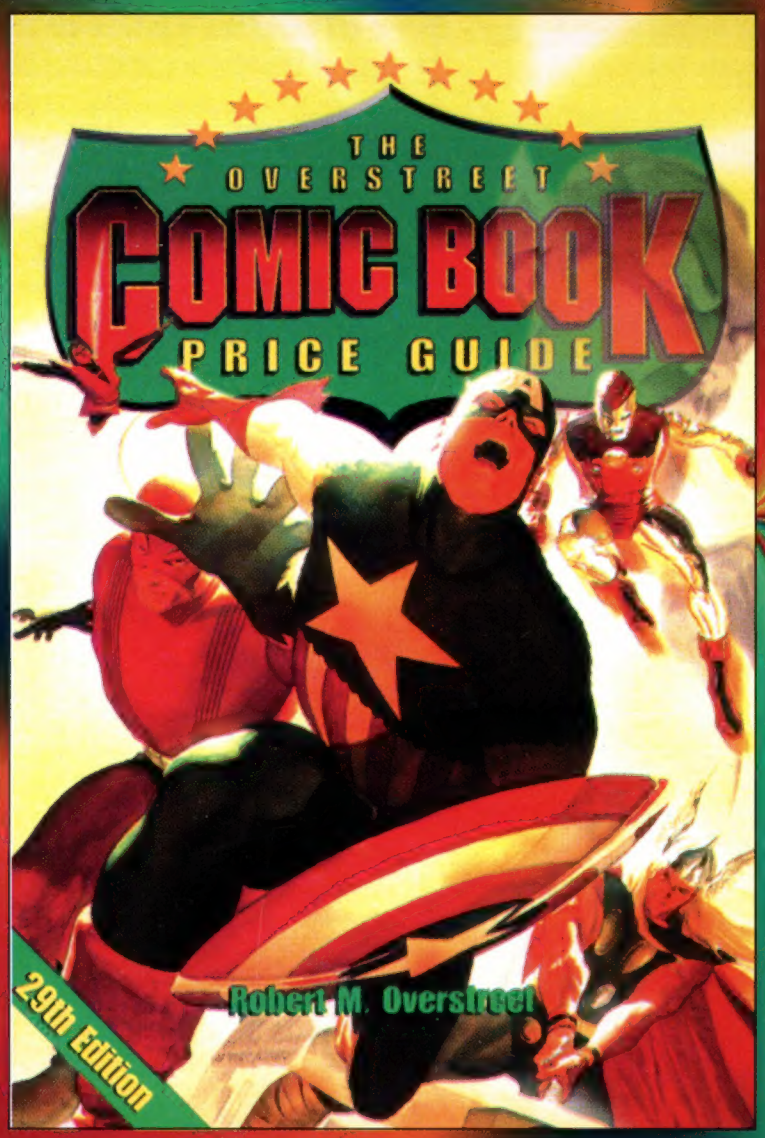

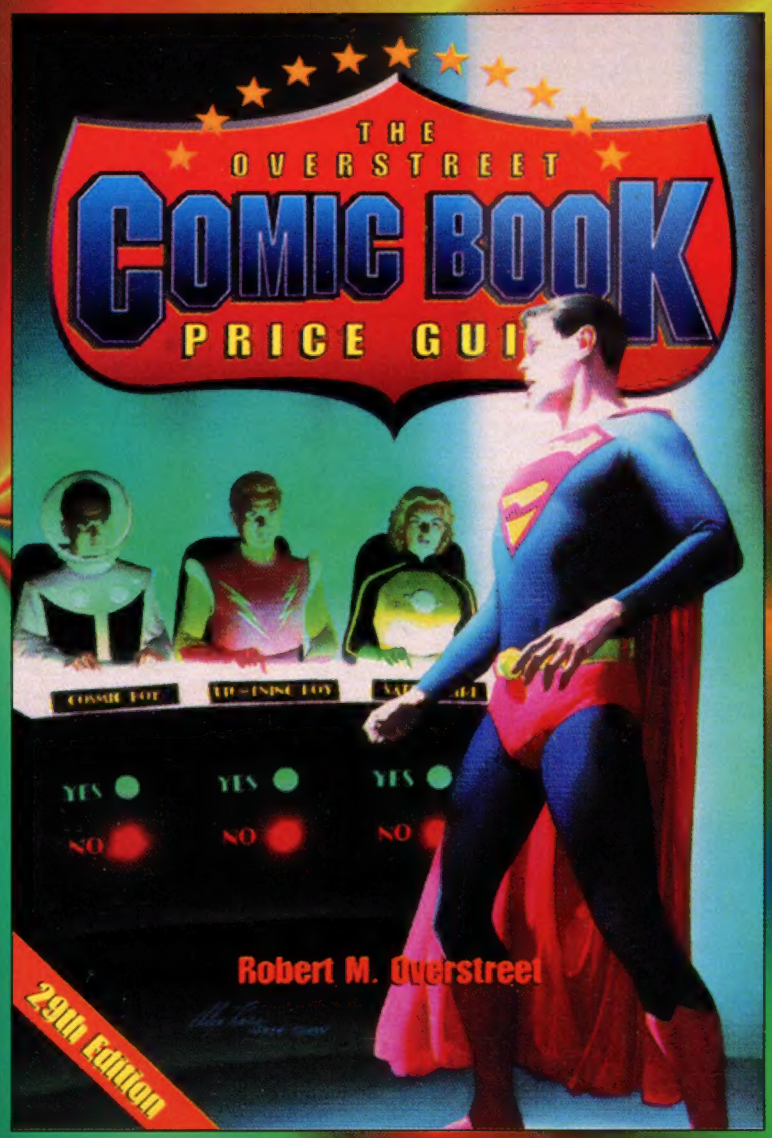

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